

A
Manual
on
Dog
Training

GAUTAM UNNY

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Popular Science

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I also wish to thank Brigadier Parthasarathi (Retd.) the Chief Consultant at my clinic, who almost a decade ago asked me to write a book on training. I scoffed at the idea then but today thanks to National Book Trust, India that dream comes true. Last but not the least I would like to thank my clients who posed so many queries during our day-to-day interactions, that made me to think of penning this manual.

DR. GAUTAM UNNY

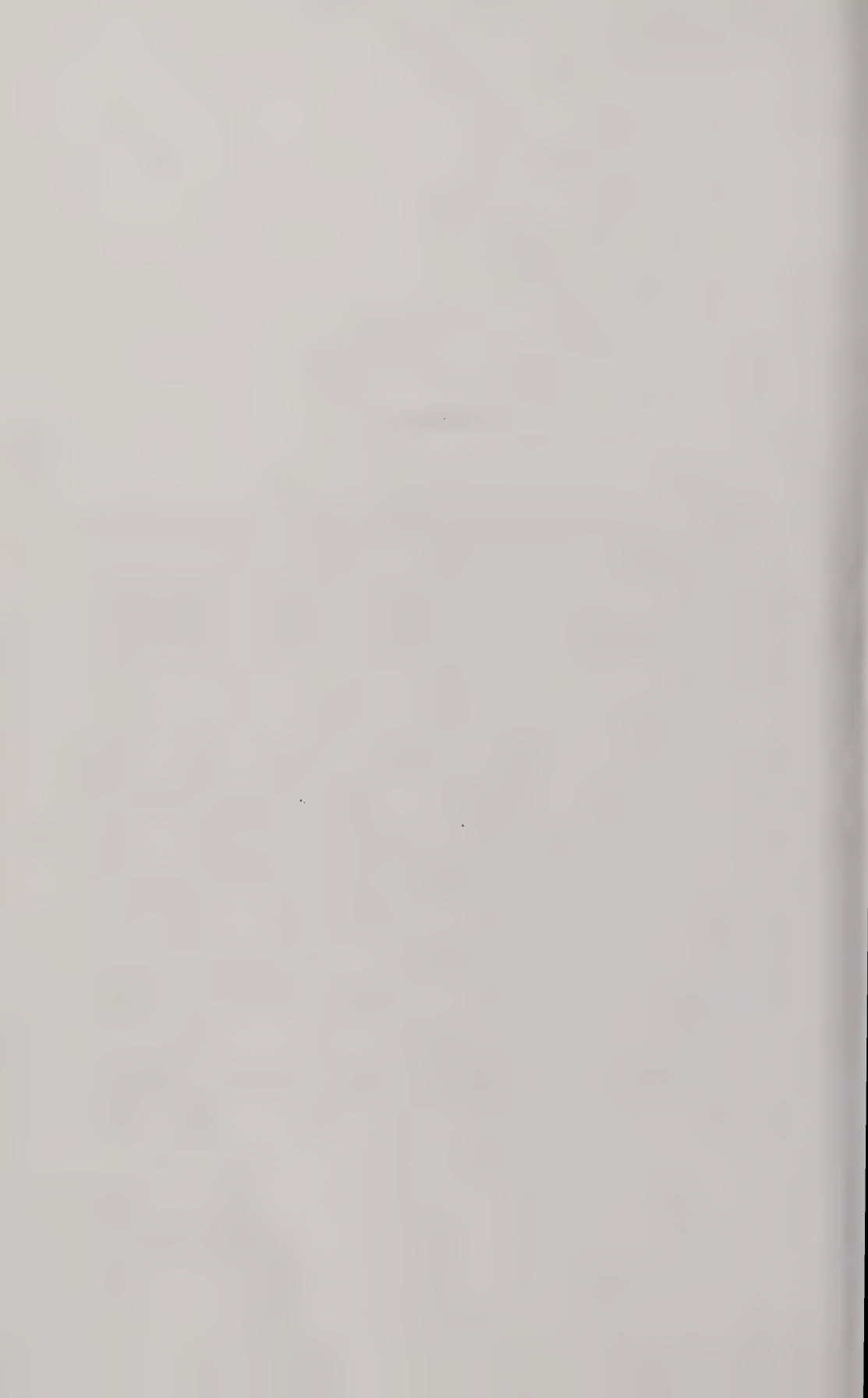
Foreword

I have had dogs as pets for more than two decades and find that training one's pet is probably the most important part of raising a dog. This book is a wonderful guide on how to train your dog from puppyhood till he becomes an adult. The simple language and colourful photographs really assist in understanding the handling and disciplining of a pup.

This book is especially good for new pet owners who have got a pet without realising the implications and responsibilities of keeping one. A pet needs patient and loving, yet firm handling to make him a part of the household. He must blend in as a family member, and the relevant technique is very well explained in this manual. Dr Unny's decade long experience with dogs shows through the text. The book has extensive chapters on different types of dog training covering subjects like training disobedient dogs, the use of training aids and the psychological aspects of training.

This book should be an asset to dog lovers who already have pets, and also to those who plan to get a new one.

KAPIL DEV
Eminent Cricketer



Preface

I have written a couple of books in the past on general dog care. A large number of my clients who read the book said that the main problem they faced in their daily lives was not the general care, but their pet's behaviour. Some dogs were either too docile or extremely aggressive. Some had problems relating to destruction within the house the moment owners left, while others faced problems when their pets stole food. In some cases the pets refused to go with their trainers who were too harsh. My clients asked me so many questions, that I felt compelled to write something to address these problems.

I had the good fortune of having a retired army dog squad trainer working at my clinic. He showed me by example of how through sheer patience even the most stubborn dog could be trained. It became clear that like flowers in a bouquet, all dogs were different. Some needed very firm handling while others were so soft that if one yelled at them they refused training. I found that the best trainers were those whose dogs rushed to meet them. Dogs hold no malice and never shirk from hard work. Therefore if your dog does not want to go out with the trainer for a romp in the park then something is amiss. If and when a dog begins to hide in fear on seeing the trainer approach, then it is time to fire him on the spot! The pet is the best indicator to how good the instructor is. This is what my trainer showed me as my pet Boxer would rush out the moment he came. I personally never felt the same when

my tutors came home, therefore the trainer obviously was great!

There have been so many developments in the world of training. From the clicker training methods used to train dolphins to the latest shock collars used as extreme forms of negative enforcement there is much information that needs to be spread. Chapters are included on how to select a good pup, the basic principles of training and the equipment needed. Basic obedience training and advanced training have been elaborated while a chapter on rectifying bad habits and overcoming situational problems too has been added. The last chapter where the most common questions I have been asked by my clients too has been given a place.

The main aim of this book is to make the pet owner and potential reader understand that dog training is probably the most important aspect of rearing a pet. People underestimate the damage that an untrained pet can cause, be it emotional, physical, financial or even social. A badly trained dog could attack your child. It may also be the main reason why your relatives or friends refuse to visit your house. Considering all these factors I do hope that readers take out time to read the finer aspects of training that have been highlighted in this book. This book is the result of my past experience and aims to bring out dog training as perceived by both the owner and the dog.

AUTHOR

IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING

Training is an art as well as science. It is very important that a prospective pet owner knows all about training before actually venturing out to buy a dog. The most common response I get at my clinic from most of my clients on my asking about their pets training is 'Why should I train my pet. I do not plan to take it for a dog show'. This attitude is not correct, as training is an important and integral part of responsible dog ownership. While keeping a pet, the owner has some moral obligations (Plate 1). A medium to large-sized animal that is not trained, could be a social threat besides being an embarrassment for the owner. There is also a school of thought that a dog is not a circus animal that should be taught 'tricks'. I fully endorse these sentiments but wish to emphasise that even a child in the house is taught necessary manners. Therefore, the pup too needs basic obedience training (Plate 2).

One of the most irritating things seen quite routinely is the pet drooling or stealing food when left alone for a few minutes. Often, while visiting friends, the pet dogs jump up and almost knock over the guests, at times. Though some people might love their exuberance it is very irksome for a non-dog lover. A well-trained animal on the contrary would go up to the visitor, sniff him and then curl up to lie down in the same room. This way it can keep a watch on the newcomer and yet not trouble the visitor. There are a few people who have practically become outcastes because their dogs are too aggressive or do not behave properly.

There are a few guidelines for responsible dog ownership. The first is that the pet should not be a physical threat to the family or the neighbours. Quite a few pets snap at strangers if allowed to walk without a leash. Also, certain states in India have a rule that dogs being exercised on public property must be leashed. In case they bite someone then the owner by law is responsible for its action. There have been cases when vicious canines have mauled and even killed children. Thus, pets must be given basic obedience training so as not to be a source of physical danger to anyone.

Apart from the safety of the neighbours one also has to consider the well being of the dogs and their handlers. Go to any park and one can see young children and elderly people being dragged by their pets! A well-trained dog is taken for a walk while an untrained one takes the handler for a walk! This of course can result in serious accidents. A canine dragging a child might run headlong into heavy traffic causing injury to both. Basic obedience in these animals teaches them to walk on heel alongside the handler without tugging on the leash. I still remember a case where Moti, an energetic Labrador pulled one of my clients, consequently making him fall and fracture his nose. Moti has since been trained but had this been done earlier this injury could have been avoided. The advantage that both the well-trained dog and the owner get is that they help each other stay fit mutually by walking long distances together (Plate 3).

I have always felt that those dogs that obey their owners have an easy time at the veterinary clinic. Most of the dogs feel paranoid as soon as they approach a vet clinic. This is because in the past they have had traumatic experiences. The first impression is often the last impression. If one can make the first few veterinary examinations pleasurable then the pup will enjoy future visits. In the chapter on puppy training (*see* Chapter 5) there are details about how to teach the young dog to stand still while it is

being groomed. If the animal allows itself to be groomed for ten minutes, it will in all probabilities wait patiently while the vet examines it. It can also be trained to eat a vitamin or calcium tablet daily. This training will be of great help when it has to be medicated later in life. Any good habit taught to a pet will stay for life. Similarly any bad habit that the young one picks up will be difficult to break.

Training a dog will also make travel easy. It is a fact that many pets hate car travel. This could be because they are generally taken out to the vet. Such animals create quite a racket as adults and can make driving unsafe. They may also tend to vomit during the journey apart from giving the driver a headache due to their constant barking! One good way to make the pup enjoy car travel is by having someone to sit by its side initially. This reassures and makes it feel comfortable. A few treats on the back seat too act as an incentive to keep it happy. The visits must not be restricted to the vet and occasionally they should also go to a park in the neighbourhood. A pet trained to travel by car can be taken on long drives during the vacations.

Each breed over the years has been bred to perform certain functions. Training is hence only a reinforcement of these inbuilt characteristics. A Labrador can be taught scent determination and retrieval very easily. Similarly the guard dogs like the Dobermann and the Alsatian need only a little help to be well-trained escorts. The Toy breeds learn to perform tricks easily. If the owner optimises the potential of his pet then he can get the best out of it. On the other hand if the animal is not trained then its intrinsic genetic constitution could make it be dangerous. The guard dogs like the Rottweiler could pose serious problems in a household where obedience training has been neglected.

The ultimate purpose of training however, for the canine connoisseur is to take them for shows. The dog show is the ultimate test of a canine's ability. The obedience trails at these shows tell a lot about the pet. Lot of people

throng the show grounds to catch these magnificent animals in action. The perfect harmony existing between the dog and trainer is a treat to watch. Every year there are close to fifty shows across India and the reader can see these competitions and understand the true value of good training.

The first year of the pup's life is the most crucial period. This is the stage when it learns how to interact with the family and the outside world. The owners who realize the value of this time and utilise it to a maximum have well-behaved dogs. A well-trained animal is an asset that will pay rich dividends in the long run. An untrained dog on the other hand can prove to be a liability one will have to pay for. This book aims to teach the average person simple techniques to have an obedient and loyal pet. Dog training is not something that requires twenty minutes of teaching each day. It is in fact a continuous process that goes on each minute the pet is with the owner. This book aims to help readers comprehend how a pup or dog thinks and to teach it without having to exert too much.

Here I have to confess that the first dog I had about twenty-five years ago could not be trained. He came to us after he was one-year old. Since he was my first dog I had no clue about training. He went on to live with us for ten years. Because of the lack of training we had to keep it tied for long periods. This made him aggressive and temperamental. We could not trust him completely. To date I feel of guilty about the fact that I did not do justice to him. The awareness on canines at that time was rather low. I wish to lessen this guilt by sharing my knowledge on canine psychology and proper dog training.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

Training a dog is a lot of hard work with no short cuts. Those who try to use quick techniques in training invariably end up spoiling their pet.

To get a good insight into proper training one must first understand the basic principles involved. First the trainer must stop visualising the dog from human perspective and must instead comprehend its thought process. Dogs were always members of a pack. They need proper hierarchy to keep them feeling secure. In a pack there is always one single alpha male or dominant member. All other members live under the guidance and security of this animal. In the human family, the new pup will want to know its position. The sooner you help him understand this the faster will be its learning. A constant struggle to understand its position will make it insecure. So once you establish your superiority, half the battle is won as it will automatically respect and obey you. There are more details about the way a dog thinks, as explained in the next chapter.

The Language Barrier

Humans have over the years learnt to communicate with each other through different languages. But imagine the condition of an Indian unable to understand German, in Germany. No matter what is said to him will be of no consequence, as he will fail to comprehend what is being said to him. Dogs then obviously are also at a loss when they are meant to understand the language of the new

family or pack. It will feel insecure at this stage. It is the job of the leader to break the communication barrier. We have to slowly make it relate to words and the corresponding actions expected from the animal. It's definitely a long haul, but in due course it begins to correlate between the frequency of the sound it hears and what it is expected to do. It's only a matter of time that these young animals learn to differentiate between the different things that their owners say. To facilitate their comprehension, all members of the family should use similar words and must keep the commands short. 'Rover, come here immediately' and 'Rover Come', mean the same to him. He is basically responding to the word come. And whether come is said in Greek, Latin or English, Rover will still respond if it correlates the word with the action of coming to the owner.

In general commands like 'come' and 'go' that need quicker actions, must be repeated fast to generate more interest in the dog. Example: 'Come, come...' a single long command, with lowered frequency like 'No...' is used when a dead-stop activity is desired.

The ABC of Dog Training

Across the world, there is an accepted pattern for any behaviour, popularly known as ABC. The behavioural pattern or B follows the antecedent or A and finally we have the response or consequence C. All behavioural patterns follow the same pattern. The dog has some reason for a certain behaviour. However sometimes the owner does not see the antecedent and assumes the behavioural pattern B to be the antecedent. In such cases he will punish the pet without understanding the actual cause and it will be left confused. For good training the house members must be observant and understand why the dog shows certain behaviour. Anything that is forced on the pet without a thorough and clear understanding of the cause will complicate matters. This in the long run will lead to behavioural abnormalities.

Association of Ideas

The natural corollary to the fact that dogs don't understand languages is that they learn by association of ideas. There are a few points that must be kept in mind and the first is that the dogs associate an action to its consequence for a very short period. This means that if we are to make them accountable for their actions then the reward or punishment must be instantaneous. Research has shown that five seconds is the maximum that a dog has to understand why its being praised or punished. A common example to illustrate the importance of quick association of ideas is when the owner returns home after work. As soon as he enters he finds the pet has created a mess and torn the pillows. The instant reaction of most pet owners would be to hit or verbally scold it. However for the pup, its last action has been to joyfully run to its master. The reward it gets for this action is to be punished! So the next time the owner comes home it will be scared to approach him. To prevent it from tearing the pillows the owner must catch it during the act and punish it instantaneously. The most common technique I normally advocate is to leave a few rolled-up newspapers all around the house. This way you can locate them instantaneously if you wish to punish the naughty pet.

Another example to demonstrate wrong associations of ideas is when the pup passes motion within the house by mistake. The owner in a fit of rage drags it to the mess and scolds it. It then realizes that the pile of feces is the cause for its present condition. Note that it does not comprehend that the punishment is for passing the motion at the wrong place. So the next time it devours the evidence or eats the feces to avoid detection, and the owner has managed to create a bad habit by wrong association of ideas!

The key then is in the timing of the correction or rewarding of a particular action. Dog training revolves around timing. Quick reactions to each of the pups action

will make it understand what is acceptable and what is not. The best trainers time their responses well. They are able to correct their pets just when the action is going on. By this they will learn instantaneously.

Reinforcements of a Particular Behavioural Pattern

Dogs learn only by habit. Bad habits could remain with the set for life. Similarly, good practice that is encouraged, will also be carried forward. Therefore it is best to reinforce those commands that we expect them to continue. Reinforcements of commands can be positive or negative. Positive treatment will make the dog feel happy and contented. It will therefore try and follow it up for the rest of its life. Sometimes if it does not learn with encouragement it must be discouraged firmly and this constitutes negative reinforcement. It is better to use positive techniques as the effects last much longer.

Dogs basically want to be happy. Unlike their human counterparts they don't enjoy wallowing in sorrow! Therefore things that keep them happy will be performed again and again. The real secret of a good dog-owner relationship is that the pets love to please their masters. Therefore if the master is happy so will the pet be. If the master shows his pleasure either verbally, physically or with food treats it learns that the behaviour should be repeated. These then are the positive reinforcements that the owner can use. By sounding happy and by patting the pet, the owner can make it feel good. However, inadvertently sometimes we give incorrect rewards. Patting the head of a dog shows dominance on our part and may be resented by the animal. In such cases we are indirectly scaring or intimidating the pet.

Similarly if we want to discourage some action that is unacceptable we must instantaneously punish it. Negative reinforcement can be verbal or physical. Verbal techniques are more effective and if used well will last lifelong. Verbally deterring does not mean shouting and letting our

neighbours know that the dog is naughty. It's the tone of the noise that matters. A stern 'No' is more than enough to stop a well trained pet. Physical punishment will not be a very useful deterrent for a large Doberman or Rottweiler. It may remain scared as a pup, but with increasing age the pain will probably make it aggressive. In dominant animals physical punishment may make them attack their owners. It is generally the thought of punishment that scares the pet more than the actual act. Therefore keep it to a minimum and it must have a surprise element. My German Shepherd was scared of a rolled up newspaper even though he was rarely hit. As an adult even though the pain would have been minimal, the very sight of the paper would scare him.

There is another form of punishment that is not totally negative. If the pet is being naughty and destructive, then remove the source of enjoyment. If, for example, the pet is tearing a pillow, remove the pillow, and isolate the pup for a short while. This way it understands that its destructive behaviour has lead to it being tied up alone, a sensation that it does not enjoy. In future it will try to avoid such a situation and the pillow as well. This may take a couple of weeks and the trainer needs to be patient. The best trainers use positive reinforcements most of the time. They only use negative techniques for totally unacceptable behaviour that would endanger the pet or the owner.

Consistency

There are numerous cases where the dog misbehaves even after it has been fully trained. When the owner is questioned, he admits that the trainer was able to control the dog. The actual problem lies in the lack of consistency on the owner's side. If one member of the house was to be lenient and the other strict, then the pet is left totally confused. A common example is when one member allows it to lie on the bed while the other does not. It is at a loss comprehending whether its lying on the bed is good or

bad! Similarly if one child feeds it below the table and the father punishes it for the same, what is it expected to understand? To get the best results all members of the family must treat it in a similar fashion.

The Actual Training

The first few sessions of training are crucial. It would be imperative that these sessions are fun-filled and enjoyable. As mentioned earlier the 'first impression is the last impression.' If the dog enjoys getting trained the procedure will be quick and effective. If it develops a mind block against the trainer then all future efforts will be in vain. Training must be in natural surroundings and within its own 'territory'. This will help in making the dog comfortable and secure. Initially the training sessions must be carried out in the house or on the terrace. After a few days as the pup gets used to the training and the trainer, the sessions can be shifted to nearby park. The park must be a place where it goes to routinely or else the new 'smells' will scare it. The last stages of training must be in populated areas where there is a lot of distraction. If it is straightway taken to a crowded place then its attention will be diverted and it will fail to learn anything. For instance, if a young male dog smells the scent of a female in heat nearby, it will get distracted.

For a pup to learn, the training must be the most fun-filled experience. Another definite cause of poor training is for the entire family to troop along. In the secure presence of the entire pack, it will not be able to learn. Therefore to sum up if you are expecting your pup to learn make sure that the area is calm and free of any distractions. At the end of the session it must be allowed to play and enjoy itself so that it waits to get back to the park the next day.

As the Training Progresses

There are different types of dogs and their natures are not similar. Some are docile while others are stubborn. More is

written on this in the chapter on pup selection (*see* Chapter 3). The main point to be grasped is that the trainer must understand the type of animal he is handling. As each session progresses the owner will get a fair idea of its true nature. If it is very sensitive then it must be handled gently. If fear is used as a tool to train such dogs they will start suffering from behavioural abnormalities.

In the initial phase of training constant encouragement is a must. Here the dog knows that each time it performs a good deed, a reward is assured. The reward can be varied and may be vocal, physical or a food treat. In the second phase of training intermittent encouragement is advisable. This means that the dog is not praised after every good act, but still rewarded after every three or four positive performances. The intermittent encouragement makes it used to the fact that a reward is given but has to be earned. The final phase of the training has challenge rewards. Here the dog is made to face circumstances where there are distractions. An assistant trainer can try and distract it. If it stays focused and rises to the challenge, it is praised and given the food treat. If it continues to obey the owner or trainer after repeated attempts to break its attention, the training is considered successful. The challenge encouragement is the ultimate test for a dog getting trained.

Another obvious but often-neglected point is that each training session must always end on a positive note for the dog. This means that it must always feel that it has succeeded at the end of the lesson. For example, when being taught to jump it must be able to cross a small hurdle at the end of the day so that it comes back happily the following morning. The same animal may refuse to even look at the hurdle if it has been hurt or unable to jump the previous day. This means that one small step forward is much better than trying to get the maximum out of the pet and when failing to do so, effectively going many more steps backwards.

The best-trained dogs never need to be told to do anything. They respond to the hand signals of their owners. Initially the dog is given only auditory commands. Next both auditory and visual commands are given. Finally it is given only visual commands. This training helps the trainer to achieve control over a great distance.

The Sixth Sense

The dog unlike the human has a well-developed sixth sense. They have an uncanny ability to understand what their owners expect from them. Ask any pet owner and he will vouch for the fact that at some time he would have felt their sixth sense in action. I have seen it practically many times at the clinic when the dog on the table knows instinctively when I am going to give it's a shot. It may not be looking at me but it still senses the exact moment the jab is due to create trouble! The best trainers can utilise the canine sixth sense to their needs. I have seen this personally in a number of police dogs and their handlers. Probably the long associations between the two make them understand each other very well. Try and develop this unique bond that will make owning your dog even more enjoyable.

PUP SELECTION

A good trainer will be able to handle just about any kind of dog. Since not all owners have a thorough understanding of training, the selection of a good pup is very essential. Just like human children canines can be temperamental and need firm handling. No two dogs are the same. Even two siblings taken from the same litter may turn out to be diametrically opposite in behaviour. 'Buy in haste and repent at leisure' is very true for families that are impulsive in buying a puppy. People who plan to get a pet need to very clearly understand what they are getting into. It is not advisable to buy a breed only because it either looks good or that the neighbour has one.

A pup is an investment. This investment takes into account your time, labour, money and also your sentiments. As with every monetary investment, if care is not taken during the selection then we stand to lose a lot. I have seen clients literally in tears at the thought of giving away unruly pets. To avoid such situations, few points must be kept in mind.

The Canine Mind

It is imperative that the family first understands how the dog thinks. It has essentially been a member of a pack. From the very early stages of evolution that is during its domestication, it began to substitute its own pack with that of the human family. It needs to have what is called a pecking order. In a flock of chicken the rooster first gets to have his fill. Next the most dominant hen will eat, and

this order of dominance continues till the weakest hen feeds last. Similarly in a pack the alpha male will be the first to eat, mate and in general call the shots. In the modern day dog's case, the human family being the pack, its hierarchy is often not properly established. This leads to a lot of confusion in its mind, which ultimately leads to behavioural problems.

Pups should be made to stay with the mother and the litter for at least first eight weeks. This period of its life is very crucial as the canine brain gets imprinted at this stage. Its mother and other siblings teach it the right and acceptable code of behaviour. This is essentially called puppy socialisation. Those animals that are weaned away at three or four weeks of age tend to develop behavioural problems later in life. I could illustrate the importance of this period with the following simple example. If the pup were to bite its mother or siblings hard, it would have been punished instantaneously. The mother would nip it on the ear or nose to teach it some manners. On the other hand the human family would spoil it by encouraging it to nip their fingers. Since it assumes that biting is acceptable, it may continue to do so for the rest of its life.

The next important aspect of the canine psychology is their intrinsic nature. All dogs as mentioned earlier are different. Their natures have four types of natural instincts. These are prey, pack, flight and fright instincts. The predominating instinct therefore decides the nature of the pet. This does not mean that it will have only one instinct. It could have varying degrees of all four.

The prey instinct determines the ability of the dog to chase and attack other animals, primarily developed over the years for hunting. The pack instinct helps it stick to the pack and determines the degree of bonding it has with its family. The flight instinct helps it to escape in times of danger when all seems lost and its survival is at stake. The fight instinct on the other hand makes the animal stand up and ward off danger.

Each breed has a different intrinsic instinct. The guarding dogs like the Alsatian or Doberman have a very high prey and fight instinct. The family breeds like the Labradors and Golden Retrievers have more of pack instinct. This makes them better suited as family pets. If a person needs a pet just for companionship then the best suited would be one with high pack instinct. Those animals that have too much flight instinct are generally submissive and of a nervous disposition. The dominant dogs always have a lot of fight instinct. For a first time owner, a calm dog with a friendly disposition would be advisable.

All dogs have in general certain common features. The need for personal space is of prime importance not only for humans but also for our companion animals. How best they let you enter their personal space will determine your future relationship with them. The dog's own body along with its belongings like the bed, ball, bowl, etc., constitute its personal space. If for example the dog allows you to groom it happily it has allowed you to enter its own territory. Dominant and hard dogs on the other hand will not allow you to touch their coats or feeding bowls. The best trainers would try and make their trainees to accept them in this personal space.

Dogs like to enjoy themselves and need constant stimulation. Any pet that is left idle will get destructive and once this becomes a habit the owner can be in trouble. It needs a lot of physical exercise apart from play toys to keep it busy at home. Finally like humans, dogs have a strong survival instinct. They will do anything to keep their pack happy in order to gain acceptance. If the pack leader or the head of the family is able to mould the animal at the early stages then both can live in harmony.

One last point about the canine mind. Not all breeds mature at the same time. The German Shepherd is a breed that matures mentally very fast. The Boxer and the Labrador remain childish and playful for much longer. They mature well after two years of age. It is also incorrect

to assume that small breeds are calmer than the larger breeds. Some terriers are the most stubborn animals even though they are small in size, whereas the Great Dane is huge but is very docile as a breed.

Deciding What You Want

Have a clear-cut understanding of the facilities you have and weigh them against the breed you are planning to choose. For a first time owner I would advocate a family dog rather than a more dominant guard breed. This would also hold true for houses that are small or have small children. It is criminal to keep a large breed like the Great Dane in a small flat. The lack of space and exercise will definitely spoil its temperament. The time you can spend too will determine the breed selection. If you have no time to walk your dog, go in for a smaller toy breed that can exercise itself within the house. In case you keep a large breed like the St. Bernard be prepared for a huge food bill! Climatic conditions too play a major role. In cold hilly areas the furry breeds adapt better. In hotter areas animals are more suited. The vet would be the best person to consult which pet or breed to keep.

The next thing to consider is whether you want a male or a female animal. Males have higher fight instinct in comparison to the females who have a greater pack instinct. Males therefore tend to be more dominant. This is however a generalisation and not a rule. As far as the age is concerned recommend a pup is recommended for all new owners. The advantages of this include the fact that a young animal can be molded according to the owners needs. A dominant adult dog in the hands of a novice could be dangerous. This is because adult dogs have set behavioural patterns that may not be altered. Finally the cost of the animal has to be taken into account. Pure breeds with high pedigrees will cost a lot. Whether they are worth it is a matter of personal choice, but there are a lot of mixed

breed dogs that are well-trained pets. A pet is as good as its master's training ability.

The Actual Selection

If one considers the fact that the dog has to live with the family for more than a decade it is then obvious that haste is not advisable. Scout the neighbourhood for any good litters. Or, check the classifieds in the local dailies to get addresses of breeders. I would recommend a pup from a reputable breeder but never from a pet shop. Pet shops help only the middlemen and would rarely be a source for a good dog. Any shop that stocks pups like commodities would never be reliable. Before visiting a kennel or breeder it would be advisable to check his reputation. A surprise visit to the kennel will help in finding out if hygienic standards are maintained.

Good breeders on the other hand will provide you details of the sire and dame, their past litters and the present pups. If one gets to see the parents half the selection process is over. Check the health status of the parents and also their medical records. The best breeders will give you a pup only after the first preventive vaccination is over. Ask to see the full litter with the mother as this provides you with a lot of valuable information.

One good method of selecting a puppy is to pick up that one which the mother cares for the most. By the law of natural selection the mother will provide the best support to its healthiest offspring. This animal will be the first to the feeding bowl and eat the maximum. Leave the litter alone and once they are asleep call out in a loud voice. The pup to run out to you the fastest will be the most active of the lot. In general the entire litter should be onto the stranger in a flash. If this does not happen and the litter is dull, either visit later or better still skip the breeder. Pups that growl at you or shrink when you approach them show a dominant and nervous disposition respectively. They are best avoided unless you are an expert at training.

After the first general and casual look at the litter see if they all look alike. Most of the pups must be of similar size and weight. This would prove that the breeder has spent a lot of time and energy in looking after the litter. The males will definitely be a little larger in size. Choose one from the lot and take it to a calm area. The next stage involves taking a close look at it to see if it fits the breed standards. Only a rough estimation can be made of the breed and true characteristics will develop only by six months of age.

Ask a vet about possible inherited diseases before going to take a look at the pup. Have a good close look at the legs and gait. Due to the excessive inbreeding over the past decade the modern day dog tends to suffer from many genetic diseases. One of the main problems that medium to large-sized breeds can acquire is called 'Canine Hip Dysplasia'. In this condition due to an abnormal muscle to bone ratio of the hips, the pets have weak hips and get paralyzed in due course. This is seen in twenty-five per cent of the entire Alsatian population. Avoid selecting pups with a wobbly or unsteady gait. These could be potential candidates for this ailment. Similarly the Dalmatian must be carefully checked for deafness.

Generally a healthy pup will be well-boned, with good musculature and a shine on the coat. There should be no discharge from the eyes. Any purulent greenish discharge from them will be an indicator of disease. In case the tummy is pot-bellied then the possibility of worms is high. Do not mistake these animals to be healthy. The skin must be checked for parasites especially ticks and fleas. These not only spoil the coat but also are known to transmit blood borne diseases and worms in dogs.

Take a toy, like a ball attached to a long string. Play with the pup and see if it chases the toy. Suddenly stop playing, push it back and say 'No'. If it stops momentarily and then continues to play it has a stable disposition. If it growls and charges at you it has a great prey instinct and

has dominant nature. And if it runs away in fear, it is too meek and of a submissive disposition. This simple and inexpensive test will provide a vital insight into how you can expect the pup to turn out as an adult. Select the animal that passes this test. Leave it in a quiet room till it goes to sleep. Burst a balloon and make a loud noise so that it jumps up. The best pups will begin to investigate the cause in a few seconds!

One last test will be able to tell a lot about the pup. Hold it in the palms of your hands in such a way that it lies on its back facing you. Stare hard at the pup clasped in your hands. If it stares back or wriggles too much it is dominant. If it lies in a calm fashion just seemingly enjoying the whole affair it has stable behaviour. The submissive ones will squirm and cry!

The last part about selection would involve choosing only one pup. If possible never take two siblings from the same litter—especially if you plan to take two of the opposite sex. The reason for this is that if they cross then it will propagate inbreeding or the breeding of two close relatives that will throw up many genetic defects in the subsequent litters. Most canine psychologists suggest keeping only one pup at a time because this will help it to form a stronger bond with the human family. If two pups are kept together they will gel better with each other than with the family.

Under no circumstances must more than three pups be kept together. The reason for this is that dogs are basically pack animals and if many are left together it may lead to fights. Remember that in a pack there is a dynamic hierarchy that has to be maintained. The fight for the top position never really ends. The moment one of the members becomes weak the fight for supremacy resurfaces. This can lead to serious fights. Another possible consequence is that in guard breeds when a large number of dogs are left together, their prey and fight instinct is strengthened greatly. This will make them more prone to violence. If one

were to watch the numerous animal serials on television, the maximum dog attacks on children and others is by packs of dogs. Rarely does a single dog attack in as savage a manner as a pack of three or more dogs. In case you still plan for a large number of dogs, then kenneling them separately will be a good idea. Leave them together only when there is human supervision that is when the pack leader, in this case the owner, is around.

THE IDEAL TRAINER

By now the reader has probably understood how to select a good dog—one that suits his or her temperament. But even a top class dog can be rendered worthless if the owners themselves fail to train it well. In this chapter I have tried to highlight the few basic qualities that a trainer must have. At the very onset I wish to emphasise one point that, it is best if the owner and the trainer are the same person. Most people prefer to employ a professional trainer due to time constraints, etc. However, those dogs that have been trained by the head of the family respond best to the training sessions. I hereby assume that the owner will try and train the pet himself, but if this not possible then the services of a professional should be employed.

It is imperative that the trainer be a dog lover. Unless we love them from the bottom of our hearts we really cannot train them. We must be ready to forgive their mistakes and lapses of concentrations. A dog lover will never raise his hand in anger on a pet, however badly it may behave. Training involves a lot of patience which is the most important virtue in this trade. It takes a lot of time to make a pup understand something. Looking at life from its perspective might be simpler. For example, every day the trainer takes it out on a leash. It might have been till then sleeping happily in its den. Then the trainer begins to speak in a language that is totally alien to it! On top of this it is pushed down and made to sit, stand or lie down! What is the poor thing expected to understand. All it realises is that every time it sits down it gets a treat or a pat. This

slowly gets embedded somewhere in his brain that the sound 'Sit' plus a biscuit means it should sit. All this takes time. Some pups learn faster than others. On the other hand, if at this stage the trainer gets angry, the pup can end up confused.

The trainer must be consistent in his training. Dogs learn by habit and by the association of ideas. Every time a dog is given a treat say with the right hand it will experience a sense of joy. If the trainer uses his left hand to punish his dog then the pet associates it with pain. In due course just by looking at the hand that the trainer lifts the dog will experience happiness or pain! This takes time but eventually does happen. If the trainer uses both his hands without any proper thought the dog will be confused. All the commands must be short and precise. Only one consistent command must be given for any training imparted. This way it will learn fast.

Regularity is an important aspect of training. Being regular does not mean that the dog must be taken out at the same time every day for training. It means that the pet must be taken out daily for training. Do not make the training monotonous. The dog must enjoy each session. It must wait to go out for the training. If it is seen waiting for the trainer then the exercise is being well conducted. There is no need to make the affair regimental. The trainer should have sessions that are regular yet spontaneous. Short sessions are preferred to longer ones. This is because the time that the pup can concentrate is minimal. Long grueling sessions will leave it tired and demoralised. Two half-hour sessions twice a day is better than one long one. Also all sessions must be carried out empty stomach so that the pup is hungry enough to appreciate the few tit-bits given to it.

It would be important for the trainer to have a sharp sense of observation. A skilled trainer will be able to observe the minute aspects of his dog's behaviour. Sometimes these will be able to avert major problems later

on. An example to illustrate this is during the training the trainer is expected to observe the position of the dog's hips in the command 'down/stay'. The moment its hips begin to rise it is an indication that the command is going to be disobeyed. The time gap between this and the dog actually standing up is less than a second. The best trainers will be able to reprimand it instantly and thereby ensure compliance to the command. Another common example is seen while walking the dog. The moment it sees another canine, it will stiffen and prepare to either run or fight. The trainer if able to observe this minute change will be in a position to command the animal to calm down. If he fails to observe this, it will either run away or get into a fight.

Another factor is the position of the trainer. As mentioned earlier the dog being a member of the pack needs a leader. If the trainer fails to establish himself as the *numero uno* member, the dog will just not obey. By canine pack logic the leader is always right and gets to do everything first. Therefore it is obvious that the trainer must eat well before he feeds the dog. By this the pet begins to understand that it is lower in the hierarchical ladder. Another way to establish your superiority is by taking its toys while it is playing. If you have total control of its personal belongings you will easily prove your superiority. These techniques might seem cruel but they go a long way in maintaining discipline. Any stable unit can have only one leader—the trainer has to be the alpha member of his pack.

The next thing that the trainer needs to be is calm yet firm. The pack leadership is dynamic and not always stable. The dog will at some time try and stake claim to the leadership. This is inevitable. Every owner would have come across a time when he tries to approach his pup only to find it growl back. This is rebellion that needs to be quelled immediately! If at this stage the owner sternly reprimands it and punishes it, the mutiny is nipped in the bud. If the owner backs off the dog will score a minor

victory. Thus, when next time the owner tries to assert himself the growls will be louder and angrier. In due course it will realise that it is superior to the owner and then there could be a problem.

The trainer needs to be energetic with quick reflexes. There are two types of pups—the hard and the soft ones. As the names suggest the former are more difficult to train and can be stubborn. The latter in turn are docile and easy to mould. The trainer of a hard pup needs to get one thing clear. It has to involve a lot of energy to get it to learn. Hard pups rebel at almost anything and everything. They seem to love to fight back. Their trainers need to be quick and the moment the dog disobeys they must punish the pet immediately.

The last thing about a trainer is that he must be able to dissociate himself from his personal life during training. He may have a lot of problems but during the training session he must have his entire focus on his job. It takes only a few minutes to spoil a dog. If the trainer feels frustrated and punishes a soft pup then he may scar the animal for life. In this chapter I have referred to punishments a lot of times. This does not mean physical beatings but rather by verbally showing displeasure. The trainers who never physically punish their dogs are the best—as love is a stronger tool than fear to train a dog.

By the end of this chapter the reader would have decided if he is able to meet most of the requirements of a good trainer. If for some reason the owner cannot meet these demands or feels unsure of training the dog, he should employ a professional trainer. The credentials of such trainers must be verified. Their past trainings must be looked at and if satisfied then only should the owner employ them. The local vet or neighbours often give you details of a few reliable trainers. However to me the dog will himself vouch for the trainer. If after a week of training the dog runs out and greets the trainer—he has proved himself. If on the other hand the dog tries and

hides behind the sofa at the very sight of him—its time to dismiss him!

The best trainers are those who command a respect of their dogs yet have the consideration a mother has for her child. Since the first canine year is supposed to be equal to nine human years one can understand the pup's age. The tender pup can either be natured into a wonderful companion or spoiled totally. Just as a parent has only the best interests of the child in mind so must the trainer be. It takes time, energy, effort, patience, compassion and keen observation to get a well-trained dog. Ask any owner who has put in this effort—he will vouch for the fact that it is nothing compared to what he gets in return.

PUPPY TRAINING

The new pup that comes into your house is at a total loss to understand the sudden transformation that has taken place. From the cozy warmth that the mother used to provide to the sudden disappearance of all the siblings. It's all very traumatising for the poor creature. It is quite a wonder that it adjusts as fast as it does. The first week after it comes to the new home is a very crucial period. This is the time it sizes up the new environment and its new family. As one canine psychologist puts it 'the pup is a better judge of the owner's character than he himself is'.

A pack has a certain discipline. This has been inbuilt by nature to assure the safety of the unit. All the members of the pack must maintain proper decorum—if you want things to settle down fast. What normally happens is that the moment the new pup arrives the children get excited and start playing. Tug of war is the most common game. The children pull the pup and it pulls back. All this is great as a game—as long as the pup is small. But the moment it grows, the children expect it to stop. So here is rule number one. Play with your pup in the same way as you would with an adult dog. Violent games involving hitting, pulling, beating, etc., are not acceptable.

The second rule follows the first one. Be consistent with the rules. The pup has had certain learning experiences with the mother. The mother has clearly taught it that biting is unacceptable. Do not allow it to bite you or the children playfully. Make things clear to it that the only things it can bite are its teething bones and toys. Furniture

and fingers are out of bounds. Train it to play only with its own belongings. This will solve a lot of problems including preventing destructive behaviour.

All of us want a strong leader. The pup too wants to have a powerful person to teach it. This is the third rule but applies to the human family—the new pack. All pack members must be firm with it and not accept indiscipline. But since it has lost all its old companions the love it requires too must be given. It's a great thing to like the pup. The cute cuddly ball of fur will make your hearts melt. So do young innocent children, but rules should not be bent. In case the children of the house do not learn to assert themselves then the dog will dominate them later in life.

Prevention is better than cure. This statement holds true in puppy training. Try and nip any kind of unacceptable deeds immediately. Dogs learn by habit and conditioning. If they develop a bad habit then it will be very difficult to make them break it. If as a young pup you have allowed it to sleep on the bed then it will continue to do so as an adult. If you do not want this to happen then have it sleep in a box near you. In due course it will learn that this is its own private place and learn to happily stay there itself.

Another rule is that it must be kept engaged at all times. The pup that you are getting home will be full of energy. It will tend to sleep for as long as eighteen hours a day. The remaining six hours will be the time you will be tested to the maximum. The best way to keep it out of trouble is to tire it. Play games with it till it settles down. A pup with no outlet for its energy will get spoilt. It is the duty of the new pack to provide companionship to the newest member.

The last but most important rule. Do not delay the time of the training. There is a certain receptive period in the life of the pup. After this period it will not learn much. The essentials of basic house training will be learnt till the age of four to five months. After this it will develop its own

character and may even resent any new rules being imposed. The trainer must get all the basic rules across to it by this age.

Introducing a New Pup to an Existing Pet

Before I dwell into how to get a pup acclimatised to your home, this small section is to help it adjust with an existing dog. Generally it does not take very long for the senior canine to accept a new pet. In some cases if the adult dog has very high prey instinct and is extra possessive of its own territory then care is required. The first rule that the trainer must remember is that the elder dog's sentiments are of prime value. It is his territory that is being invaded by a youngster who seems to hog all the limelight, hitherto reserved for him. It is but natural then that he will feel insecure!

If the dog overtly shows aggression towards the pup then it is better to separate the two by a wire-meshed door. Let them have a good look at each other for a week before they are allowed to meet. If the aggression continues even after this period then the next meeting must be at a neutral venue, say a park or a friend's house. They must be left together in the initial week only in the supervision of the owner. Leaving the two alone if they are not getting along would be a recipe for disaster. The feeding bowls of the two must be kept in different rooms and they must feed separately till they are totally at ease with each other.

The Basic Rules

As we have already read in the last chapter, the trainer is expected to be calm yet firm. He has to be consistent in his style of training. The end of the training must be on a positive note. The sessions must be short and the person must not tire the pup. Physical punishment must be to a minimum and only if absolutely needed. He should praise his pet for every good deed but never too much.

Let us now go to another important concept. There is

a difference between a reward and a bribe. A reward is accepting a good action and appreciating it. A bribe on the other hand is given to escape from a dangerous situation. The results of the two vary. The reward is good way to teach the canine. The bribe is for escaping from potential danger and preventing harm to the trainer and/or the dog.

Rewards can be given to a pup consistently initially. This will be an inducement to work better. The more one varies these the better the results. For example a food treat works better than vocal praise. So reserve giving tit-bits for the best behaviour. For lower intensity actions make do with a pat or 'Good Boy'. As the training progresses the frequency of rewards should decrease and the pup must be kept guessing when it will be praised. Their timing is of great importance. If an action is appreciated immediately after completion it will correlate faster and hence learn well.

Bribes on the other hand must be kept to a minimum. In a way it is accepting defeat and shows a breakdown in training. For example, a pup lies on a bed and refuses to get down. As you command it to get off it refuses and growls at you. If you offer a biscuit to tempt it to get down, it's a bribe! (Plate 4) Such actions allow a pup to learn to dominate. Avoid such situations as far as possible. A bribe is acceptable in the following case. The pup is being taught to walk without a leash. It suddenly darts behind another dog. If in spite of repeatedly calling it does not come back, a food inducement could be given. This will defuse a potentially dangerous situation wherein it could get hurt badly.

Name Recognition

The first thing that one must teach a pet is its name. As mentioned earlier dogs are not linguists! Therefore keep the names short and simple. A good name will be a maximum of five to six alphabets and will not rhyme with any command that is to be taught. For example 'Brandy'

is a good name that will not confuse the pup. On the other hand a dog called 'Rum' will be confused with the command 'Come'! In case the household has two pups then keep the different sounding names. Two dogs in a house called 'Spot' and 'Dot' will get confused each time they are called. All the members in the house should also call it by the same name. If all the members call it by a different name then it will never learn to respond properly. Lastly the best time to teach its name is before feeding it. As the pup anxiously awaits its food, if one were to call it aloud, it will associate its name with itself. Most dogs take no longer than a week to learn their names.

The Value of 'No'

If one were to teach a pup only one word it would be 'No'! Because if it understands what is unacceptable the rest is very easy. Unfortunately few people place stress on this command. And some who do are not forceful enough. From my point of view the word 'No' must make it realise that its time to back off. This command will make training very easy.

The pup must value the meaning of this word. If for everything it does, this word is used then it will get put off. 'No' is a kind of negative reinforcement. It must be used sparingly and judiciously. If at any point of time it begins to resist responding to it, it must be punished. For example, the pup is on a leash and is trying to eat something on the road. The trainer must first say 'no' in a stern manner. If the pup continues the unacceptable behaviour, a sharp tug on the leash with the command repeated again will get you the desired results.

If for some reason it still refuses to obey then more stringent action is called for. In its natural family, if the pup misbehaves repeatedly, after an initial warning the mother would grab it by the scruff of its neck and shake it well. This shock treatment would settle even the most naughty pup. This exactly what the trainer is expected to do. The

timing is important and the moment it is into the unacceptable deed, grab it by the scruff of the neck and rebuke it with a stern 'No'.

But the sequel of all these corrections must be with love. The main purpose of correcting the animal is to teach it—not to alienate it. Teach it good manners but at the end shower it with love. Let it not feel unwanted, as this could make it resentful of the trainer. Understand the natural instincts of the pup. All it wants to do is have a good time. As long as this is within the borders of acceptable behaviour let things continue.

Housebreaking or Toilet Training

The most integral part of the initial puppy training is to learn where it is expected to answer the nature's call. A dog is conscious of its own territory and would never dirty it intentionally. After being born the pup had nothing to worry. As soon as it defecated the mother would lick and clean the mess. By this technique the mother kept the immediate surroundings clean. Later by the age of one month it would run to the corner of the room leaving the breeder to clean the mess! Suddenly the pup is got to new alien area and expected to go out each time he feels uneasy! It just cannot comprehend the new rules immediately.

It is here that the new family or pack has to take over and educate the pup. There are a few simple guidelines to help the owner. First it must be taken to the area it is expected to use as its toilet after every meal and sleep cycle. It will invariably urinate after sleeping and eating. The second thing is that it must be observed very carefully on the first day it is got to the house. If the owner can take it out on this day and avoid accidents a major victory is won. Thirdly if any accident does occur and it does dirty the house, it is not the fault of the animal, but a lapse in concentration on the part of the owner. In such a case do not punish it but rather be more careful in future.

As we know that a pup never soils its own bedding, therefore make it sleep in a large carton at night. This carton must also be its den for the first month. To keep it happy here put lots of bedding material, toys etc. so that it understands that this is its own private hideout. Take it out as late as possible at night and then as early as possible the next day. Keeping the gap between these two visits to a minimum will be of value to the pet. Feed it in the morning and then immediately take it out again. This should be repeated after each meal, generally five times a day for a young canine. The same procedure is to be repeated each time it gets up from sleep. Remember it is the pup's sleep cycle we are talking about not the household's. It would be useless to wake it up and take it out just because you plan to take an afternoon siesta.

Now 'taking the pup out' means: Keep the distance from the feeding bowl or sleeping pen to the toilet area as minimum as possible. This is because a pup cannot often 'hold on' long enough! As it finishes eating, call out aloud and walk backwards towards the desired area. It will run behind you and soon reach the area. Here there is no scope of hurrying things up. It may want to play for a little time till it feels the proper 'urge'. If we feel frustrated and come back it will invariably dirty the house. If this schedule is followed religiously then it will learn in just a week. Praising it instantaneously on completing the job and simultaneously giving a vocal command like 'finish the job', will help. In due course on hearing the word 'finish', it will learn to answer its calls. One last point that must be mentioned here is that you must always leave the house first. Do not allow it to pull and take the lead. The pack leader, here in this case the person walking the pup, has the right to lead the way. If it gets used to leading then the future training may get affected.

In case a pup dirties the house, clean it up immediately with a strong disinfectant. The smell of its own urine is a source of encouragement for it to use the same area again

and again. Next throw the tissue paper, used to clean the mess, in the area it is normally expected to do its job.

In case it has got into the habit of dirtying the house, more stringent action is called for. This does not mean that the dog's nose is to be rubbed in its motion as some 'experts' suggest. As mentioned earlier it cannot correlate between the facts that because it dirtied the house it was punished. This will only make it understand that the faeces are the cause of punishment. Therefore to avoid further pain the next time it makes a mistake, it eats the mess. One small mistake by the owner and the dog turns to Coprophagy—a habit where an animal eats its own faeces!

But the reader will be wondering as to what a solution from this predicament would be. Well the only way out is to be extra vigilant and grab the pup the moment it is dirtying the house, rebuke it sternly and take it out to continue its job. There are no shortcuts in toilet training and a lot of patience is needed. Some owners are lucky that their pets have a strong sense of hygiene and learn fast. Others have to double their observation and efforts to get the desired results.

Grooming Your Pup

To some this might seem like a chore rather than a training lesson. But from my point of view this exercise is as important as obedience training. I have mentioned earlier that pups consider their bodies to be sacred space that should not be touched. But as the pack leader you have a right to groom them. If the animal has granted you these rights—then you have proved your dominance.

Hold the pup in your arms and place it on a table. Keep a small treat in the closed palm of your hand. The pet should be able to smell it but be unable to eat it. Next take a brush for a short-coated dog or a comb for a long coated animal (Plate 5). Groom it from head to tail slowly without causing pain. Next inspect the ears for dirt and if you see

any, remove it with a wad of cotton. The eyes too need to be cleaned especially in those breeds that have a lot of fur on their face, like the terriers (Plate 6). The nails must be inspected to see if they are very long. Similarly check below the tail for any dirt. At the end of the procedure praise it and let it have the food treat. This entire process must form a part of its daily routine. This will also help you gain control on the dog whenever it visits the vet as by now it would be used to standing still.

Prevention is Better Than Cure

In this section the emphasis is on what the pup is not supposed to learn. Till the age of five months it has only to learn to respect the pack or the human family and not to be destructive. This is easier said than done, as the hyperactive pup is capable of turning a house upside down. This can lead to physically endangering itself and also causing monetary losses to the owner. So in its own interest it is advisable to prevent as many bad habits as far as possible.

The first and most important thing to be taught is to keep the pup silent. When it comes to you on the first day have its box ready. This must be warm and comfortable as mentioned earlier. After making it complete its jobs and before retiring for the day leave it in the box. Most pups will begin to moan and yelp in a short time. However the owner must not go to it till the next day morning. If the family takes pity and brings it back to their bed, it will score an important win. The next time it is left alone it will whimper continuously till you return. Such pups grow up into animals that cannot be left alone. Preventing it from excess vocalisation is a must for good dog ownership.

An active animal has little time to be destructive. And if the owner can make it clear to it as to what constitute its toys then the matter is very simple! However in reality the situation is a little different, as a pup undergoing teething will chew just about anything. Keeping its toys in its box

will help. A large variety of toys and chews will keep it interested in playing. Just like little children it may get tired of a particular toy. It will of course enjoy games much more if the family joins in! Boredom must be prevented at all costs. This is one reason why I advocate the family going in for a new pet in the long holidays during summer. At this time the children can keep it fully engaged.

Till the pup learns its manners the owners must be sure to keep the house tidy. Nothing that can be destroyed must be kept in its reach. This will only make things easier for it. Shoes and socks must be kept locked in the cupboard. At my clinic the most common breakdown in pup discipline is with regard to destruction of footwear. But look at it from the pup's angle! Here is an object that has a funny smell (they love it!) and is also so easily reachable. Since it is lonely at night and misses the family, it plays with an object that has their smell!

The last precaution that the family must take is with regard to food. Food must not be left around without supervision. The ever-hungry pup will grab anything edible, including waste from the dustbin! If it gets used to stealing food then the owner has a problem for life. One good way to teach it food manners is to feed only during its regular meal times. Give it no snacks when the rest of family is at the table. Throwing a biscuit during your tea break will only teach it to take one himself when left unsupervised. The children in the house must be taught not to share the food with the new pup. It does look rather endearing when it moans and places its paws on your chair during the family dinner. If it is given a morsel at this stage it will only learn to beg in the future.

The Hard Pup

No two pups have similar behaviour. Some pups just seem to love to rebel. No matter how much they are cared for they still misbehave. Owners of such canines have what is commonly called hard pups. Hard pups seem to have a

very dominant mind and are difficult to train. This does not mean they cannot be trained but the process is more demanding and time consuming.

A hard pup knows that what it is doing is wrong and unacceptable. Even after the initial correction it will continue to misbehave. They seem to have a very high tolerance to correction and even pain. They regain their composure very fast and may even be aggressive. This is technically because of their greater prey and fight instincts. The hard pups are not just restricted to the larger breeds. Some of the hardest pups I have seen are Lhasa Apsos—those cuddly diminutive sweet looking animals.

Rarely can novice trainers manage to handle these brats of the canine world. Here is what should theoretically be done to a hard pup. The owner needs to be very firm and capable of instant correction. As soon as it acts up it must be rebuked initially with a stern 'No'. When it does not obey, the command is to be repeated. If there is no response then the pup needs shock therapy. Grab it by the scruff of the neck and repeat the command (Plate 7). Some will still try and act up. They need one more dose of the same therapy. If it pauses for a second then give it a lot of love and encouragement and simultaneously distract it by playing with it. As mentioned earlier the praise will help it realise that on behaving well the owner is happy.

In theory this does sound easy. But in practice some hard pups never learn. If the owner remains calm and does not relent or back off, the possibilities of success are greater. If the pup's aggression scares the owner then the battle is lost. Such animals are best returned to the breeder who will be more capable of handling them.



Plate 1: Well-trained dog



Plate 2: An obedient pet



Plate 3: Mutual exercise



Plate 4: Bribing the pet shows a breakdown in training



Plate 5: Grooming the pet on an elevated surface



Plate 6: Eyes too need to be cleaned in furry dogs



Plate 7: Giving shock therapy



Plate 8: Rubber toys



Plate 9: Dumb bell toys

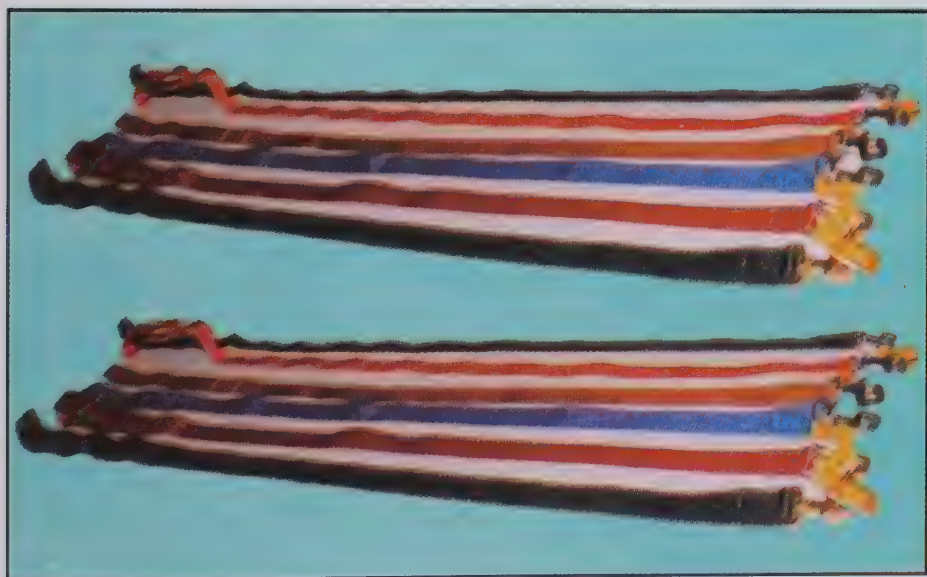


Plate 10: Nylon leash



Plate 11: Different types of collars

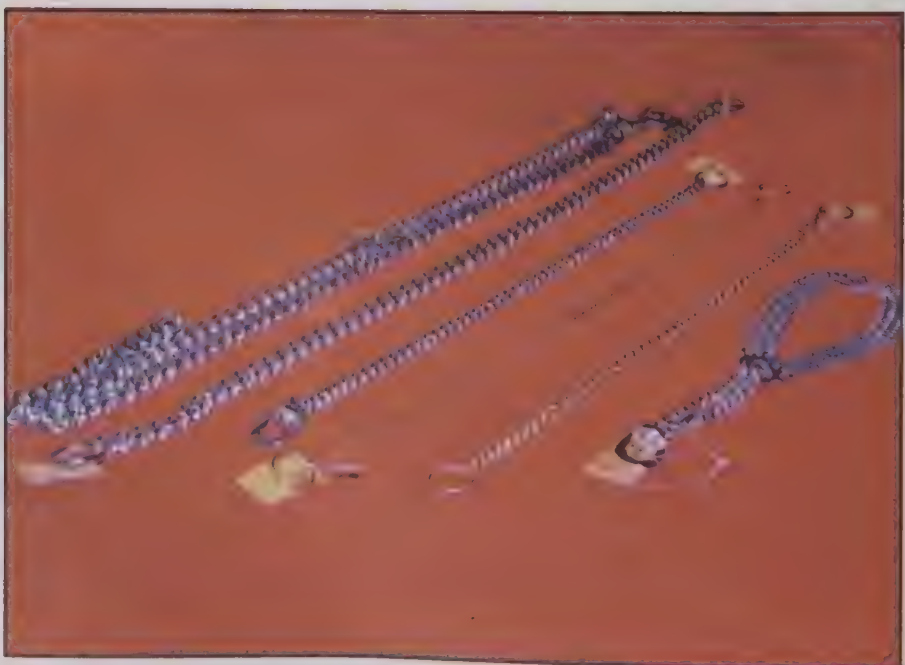


Plate 12: Choke chain collars



Plate 13: Chest harness



Plate 14: Teaching the 'Sit' command



Plate 15: Another method to teach the 'Sit' command



Plate 16: Teaching the 'Stay' command



Plate 17: Teaching the 'Long Stay' command



Plate 18: Teaching the 'Down' command



Plate 19: Teaching the pet to 'Walk on Heel'



Plate 20: The pet can even be trained to fetch the morning newspaper



Plate 21: Teaching the 'Salute' command



Plate 22: Teaching the 'Bow' command



Plate 23: The pet should enjoy the car travel with the owner



Plate 24: An untrained pet can wreak havoc when left alone at home



Plate 25: Detecting the ABCs of a problem to find the correct solution



Plate 26: Some animals tend to guard their own possessions



Plate 27: Dogs with inherent guard instincts could be trained for security purpose.



Plate 28: Teaching 'Scent determination'



Plate 29: Training dogs in catching criminals



Plate 30: Teaching the 'Bite' command



Plate 31: Pets learning 'Socialisation'

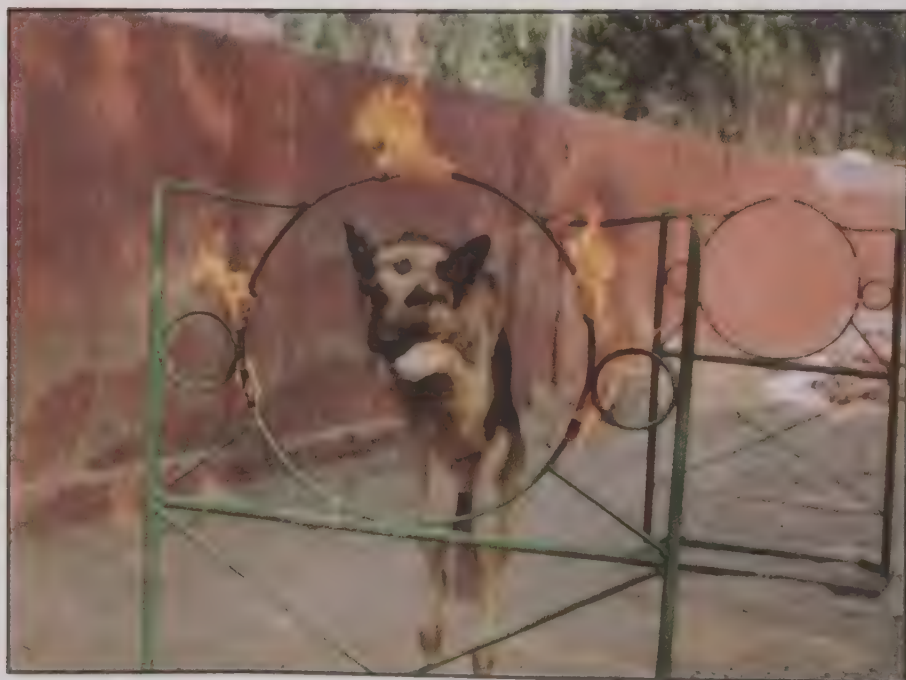


Plate 32: Teaching pets to run through hurdles

BASIC EQUIPMENT

By the age of five to six months the pup can be taken for obedience training. By this time it must have been taught to respect the trainer, once again preferably the owner. It should have certain basic training equipment to enable easy training. The first thing that it must have is a small nylon or leather adjustable collar to wear. This can be put as early as three months of age. This will teach it to accept wearing a collar. During the short walks a light leash can further be used to teach it to walk under control. It is rather comic to see the small pups walk backwards initially the first time a collar and leash are used. However this is of great importance as it enforces discipline and also ensures safety. Few owners can catch a nimble footed young pup especially if it decides to dart across a busy road.

There are no specific recommendations for training equipment. A particular collar that suits one pup may not be suitable for another. The basic aim is to ensure their full cooperation. Each animal has a different threshold of pain. A gentle and sensitive pet needs only a normal collar while a boisterous hard one may need a choke collar. Determine how sensitive your pet is to touch. The more sensitive they are the lesser is the need of equipment. Select equipment that is also comfortable in your hands and also ensures quick movement. If you take a very heavy leather leash your movement will be hindered. Take your time in getting yourself the equipment after taking the pups and your own agility into account.

Treats

These don't actually figure as basic equipment but have a role in what the trainer should carry during a training session. Treats can be either food treats or toys. A treat is something the pup will enjoy and crave for. At this stage I would like to state that a treat must be carefully selected and their effects may vary with situations. A pup that is fully satiated after a heavy meal will find no fun in a biscuit. A hungry one on the other hand will try hard to perform well just to nibble at the very same item.

Some toys too form an integral part of training equipment (Plates 8 & 9). A rubber tug or a hollow ball with beads inside can be a great source of enjoyment to the pup. The more the animal enjoys the training the faster will be the learning. A bored or tired trainee will make training difficult. Intersperse the session with a few games to make the session lively. Toys like a ball when thrown in the air may increase the prey instinct. This makes it more interested in playing with the trainer.

Leads

Just like the collar one can have either nylon or leather leashes for training. There are a number of metallic ones in the market but they are not suited for teaching purposes. It is best to begin with a six-foot nylon leash (Plate 10). This is the best to give the trainer easy access to the pup. With this leash the animal can be corrected instantly on any break in training. After it has learnt some obedience we can use a twelve or twenty-foot nylon leash. These will help in gaining control over a pup that needs to be trained at some distance. This is a particularly useful tool to teach them 'recall'. The trainer can also use an extendable nylon push button leash. This will let the pup move in a certain radius but if he wants it to stop, the button on the handle can be pushed. This will help in stopping it immediately in its track. This leash can be used when the dog is in a large open park and needs distance control.

Collars

As mentioned earlier the first training aid to be applied on a pup is the collar. There are different types of collars, but the most common is the adjustable type (Plate 11). Its chief advantage is that its length can be increased with a corresponding increase in the pup's neck girth. This helps in saving a lot of money as the rapidly growing pet often makes collars seem obsolete very fast. They can be made of nylon or leather. The leather collars need more care in humid areas where they can get spoiled. Regular removal of the collar and a quick polish will keep them in good shape. The trainer should be easily able to slip two fingers between the neck and the collar.

The check or choke chain collar is yet another type of collar used for training (Plate 12). They are the most popular choice of training collars worldwide. But they must never be used in any pet with thin and sensitive necks. As the name suggests these collars help in keeping the pup under control by partially choking it if leash is pulled. It is an integral part of the trainer's kit and if used carefully, is very useful. It can be made of metal or nylon. The main principle in their usage is that they tend to tighten on being pulled. If the pet does not strain it slackens and becomes loose. To put the chain, slip one end of the chain through the ring. It should form the letter 'P'. Then with the dog to your left, slip the chain over its neck. It should lie loose when not tightened. A good choke chain will sit snugly on the dog's neck and be around two inches bigger. It should not slip off when the animal shakes its head.

The choke chain is a device that the trainer finds very useful to teach the pup to walk in heel. The moment it strains and tries to break step, it finds an increased pressure on its neck that makes it return to the original position. Many people find using this type of chain to be cruel. I have always kept my dogs on a choke chain. They have never worn a normal collar. As they are all trained they never pull on the lead. The advantage I get with this collar

is that since it is not as tight, it rests easily on their necks. This way they do not lose any hair around this region. If by any chance any relative in my house who is not used to walking my pets has to do so, this device keeps the dogs under strict control.

But there is a flip side to using this chain. Never tie a dog on a railing with a lead and this particular type of collar. If the dog jumps off the building then the choke chain will strangulate it. Similarly if used in an incorrect manner the chain will get tight but not slacken even after it stops straining. It is best to get in touch with a regular user of this chain before trying one. Eighty per cent of my clients who have medium to large breeds use these without any causes of complain. All the trainers at my clinic too feel the need for them during the initial one-month of training.

In case the user or trainer feels uncomfortable with this chain he can go in for a half choke chain. In this collar the metal chain is attached to a nylon collar. With the nylon strap covering the major part of the neck the chain is less painful. The effect is more or less similar with the chain tightening on being pulled. They are available in different sizes with the thickness of the corresponding metallic chain also varying. In most adjustable strap collars and half choke collars an identity tag can be affixed. This will be very useful in case the pup gets lost.

The Halti Collar

This is a fairly common training aid in the West but is still to gain wide usage in India. I have personally used this aid and found it to be very useful. The first time I used this collar was on a female Alsatian who refused to walk on Heel. The choke chain worked initially but soon the animal seemed to pull even on this aid. We made the Halti collar at our clinic, as it was not commercially available. The dog took only one walk to learn to walk on heel with this collar! It means walking the dog on your left at the level of your knee without any pulling by the dog.

The Halti collar is slipped on the head of the dog and rests on the neck. The leash is attached at the lower jaw of the animal. The principle of the contraption is that when the dog pulls at the lead and runs ahead the trainers leash pulls the head back making it stop. As the momentum it gained by pulling at the leash is lost it is forced to stop. In my experience this aid is practically painless to the animal. Animal lovers who do not like using the choke chain may try this type of collar. Another variation called the 'Gentle collar' works on the same principle and is used extensively abroad. To get one of these contact your vet who can easily make one for you. Alternatively get one from the Internet that has lots of sites selling this wonderful training collar.

The Shock Collar

I recently came across a client who showed me a collar he had got in one of his numerous foreign journeys. It was as interesting contraption that made me think of its merits and demerits. This collar has a flexible and adjustable all weather collar with batteries. It is tied to the neck like all other normal collars. The difference is that the trainer has a remote that when pressed can give the dog an electrical jolt! This makes it stop all its activities instantaneously. The shock collar is used to gain distance control over the dog. A shock collar can control animals that are up to two kilometers away. It facilitates long distance negative reinforcements in them. I have yet to see it available commercially but have found it extensively on the Internet.

The shock collar seems to be a good tool to control a dog through negative reinforcements. They will work in theory if the trainer can perfect the timing of the punishment. For example a dog is out in a park. Suddenly it starts to chase a young child. If the trainer can use the remote the moment it is actually chasing then the desired effect is got. Another example could be if the dog is alone in a room and has just started to steal food. If the trainer can use this tool from a distance at the exact moment it is

stealing it will be able to correlate between the two events. The key then is perfect timing.

If the timing goes wrong then the results may be bad. If the dog does not correlate with the misdeed and instead understands something else, we may have created a bad habit. For example the pup is stealing food. At the same moment a child comes in and pats it. If the pup were to get the jolt at this moment it may correlate the unpleasant sensation to the child's petting. This will make it get an instant dislike of the youngster.

The No-Bark Collar

I have frankly not seen this training tool except on the Internet. A few vets have however told me of their potential benefits. This is a very good training aid in dogs that have got used to excess vocalisation. Some dogs seem to bark their heads off when left alone. This makes them unfit to live with the other neighbours. The 'No Bark Collar' once applied electronically detects the pets barking and stops it by negative correction. It is capable of detecting only the bark of the dog whose neck it is attached to. According to the literature available it can make the noisiest pet a 'model canine citizen' within a few days of usage. It can be put on the dog each time the owner has to leave the pet alone for some time. The dog realises that each time it barks there is an unpleasant sensation and therefore controls itself. Different sizes are available for dogs between five to hundred kilograms. It is operated by a battery and is weather resistant.

The Chest Harness

The chest harness is basically a modified collar (Plate 13). The main principle is that instead of the neck, the harness is strapped across the neck and chest. Using this tool the trainer can get some extra control over a pulling dog. The leash is attached on top of the chest. It is definitely a good tool to use on those animals that have soft necks or where a choke chain cannot be used. They are available in nylon and leather. They are also available in different sizes.

BASIC OBEDIENCE TRAINING

I have always felt that the best age to start a pup's training is at five or six months of age. At this stage it is still capable of being molded. Often after the age of seven months they start to develop aggression probably because they are also maturing sexually. The surge of hormones can cause them to become more dominant. Novice trainers may at that time find it difficult to handle such pets. Catching them early would seem to solve quite a few problems. By this age I expect that the trainer would have earned the pup's respect and they would be free of any bad habits.

In my experience the best place to start the formal training initially is at home. This is because the pup is sure of his own territory and will respond faster. A new place and vague scents can scare it. Let the trainer first make it comfortable in its own surroundings. After a fortnight when the basic commands have been taught a new venue can be selected. A nearby park would be my choice for the next stage of learning. If the pup has got used to taking walks here then it will feel more confident. This should be the place where it will master all the skills of basic obedience. The park must be enclosed to ensure that it cannot escape. The last stage of education has to be in crowded areas where the trainer will test its newly learned skills. If the animal does not get excited and behaves well then the training can be considered successful. In case a lapse in concentration occurs and it forgets its lessons, the trainer should revert to the park to further reinforce the training. Do not punish it if it fails

for this will only alienate and confuse it.

One main reason why training is often not successful is because trainers treat the pet like a machine. Each pup has a certain attention span. Some can stay focused for a long period while others get distracted in a quarter of an hour. The trainer must evaluate the animal and the length of the lessons should be adjusted. If the sessions are too short, try two or three sessions per day with adequate gap between them. A bored or tired puppy will never learn. Similarly unless the training is stimulating the animal will lose interest. The session must always end with a lot of fun. Dogs by nature love to chase and catch things. Retrieving a ball can keep it in great spirits and will also help in expending its energy. Intersperse teaching commands with short games to optimise its learning potential.

Some dog lovers feel it is cruel to send their pets out before feeding them. However it is in the dog's own interest that this is suggested. The larger breeds with pendulous abdomens must not be made to exercise on a full stomach. This is because the sagging stomach can twist on its own axis leading to a potentially fatal condition. The torsion of the stomach is very difficult to treat. Keeping them on an empty stomach will prevent this from happening. My dogs have always been trained when they are hungry. This is because they would then wait for the treat used to induce them to learn.

Now we can start with the actual commands of basic training. In basic obedience we expect the pup to behave well at home and in public. Most pets are well behaved when the family is alone and there is no disturbance. The litmus test of good training is if they do not misbehave in the presence of guests. Some dog lovers feel that the term 'command' for teaching a pup is rather oppressive. They prefer to use the terminology 'instruct'. I feel that in the first year of training it is best to command the animal to obey. Once it is well trained it can be instructed for the rest of its life.

Walking on a Leash

The first thing that a pup must be taught is how to walk on a leash. It is initially very difficult for the one young to even wear a collar. The strange sensation along with a leash pulling it can make it feel rather flustered. The first step in teaching it this simple exercise is then to make it feel comfortable. Let it smell the leash and while talking to it, calmly slip on the collar. Let it wear the collar and leash and run around the house. This way it will accept these new training tools easily. See to it that the leash does not get stuck anywhere. If it does and the pup gets a sharp tug on its neck and it will hate the leash even more.

In the next stage taking the leash in your left hand keep the pup on your left. The right hand should have a tasty treat. Extend this hand and as you walk forwards the pup will follow the treat. In case it jumps and tries to struggle stop walking and instead call it towards yourself. Do not ever drag the pup. This will only make it more wary of the leash. Instead make it sit down, pat and thereby calm it. Give it the treat and then try to repeat the procedure. In due course it will start walking with you. In case it lies down and refuses to budge place the titbit in front of it. This inducement will make it walk forwards in the direction of the treat.

This lesson is preferably first taught at home. The pup must be taken out for a long walk only after it is happy to be walking on the leash. Initially since it will definitely be apprehensive of the outside world, the trauma of having to learn to walk on a leash in these new surroundings will make its life more miserable.

Sit

The next command that needs to be taught is 'Sit'. This is probably the easiest to teach and most dogs need very little persuasion to learn it. A good time to teach it to sit down is just before the mealtime. A hungry pup will concentrate hard on the feeding bowl. If this is held high up it will be

forced to sit down to maintain eye contact with the food (Plate 14). As soon as it begins to sit the trainer is expect to give the command 'Sit'. Give it a morsel and then repeat the process. Move backwards and the hungry pet will again begin to sit down to maintain focus. After repeating the command give it the food. Since most puppies are fed five times a day they will learn to sit very fast.

Another way to teach it to sit is to hold the leash in the right hand and push its hips down gently with the left. As it begins to sit repeat the command (Plate 15). Regularly move them from one place to another and make them sit. After each successful completion of the command reward them with a food treat, 'Good Dog' or lots of petting. Gradually as they begin to sit on their own reduce the frequency of the rewards. The trainer can also have a hand signal like the downward movement of his wrist to indicate the command. If both the command and the action are shown it will learn to respond to the hand signals alone in due course.

Stay

A pup that is well versed in the command 'Sit' can be made to learn how to stay still in one place. This is not very easy but can be taught with patience. To teach it to stay it needs a leash attached to its collar. Hold the leash in the left hand and keep a food treat in the right. Make the pup sit down and then gradually move away. Make sure that it can smell the treat. Its focus should be on the treat held in the hand. As you move backwards repeat the command 'Stay' (Plate 16). After moving five steps back call it by its name and let it have the treat. Make it sit again and repeat the process. Some trainers feel that keeping a food treat in the hand makes the pup unable to stay in one position. Therefore they substitute the reward here with a lot of love.

Gradually increase the distance that it is made to stay. Initially a six-foot leash is used but later a twenty-foot leash can be tried. The trainer must be in a position to

correct it instantly if it tries to get up. The moment it makes an attempt to get up, a stern 'Sit and Stay' command needs to be given. Eventually the adult dog must be able to learn to stay in one position for at least ten minutes without moving. A good technique to ensure this is to make it sit in a stay position next to the trainer who himself sits on a chair besides the pet that is on his left. The moment it tries to get up the trainer pushes it down with a repetition of the command.

The dog in the last stage will be expected to remain in a stay position for long periods (extended or long stay) with the trainer out of sight (Plate 17). The trainer must remain out of its vision but yet be in a position to call out and reinforce the command if this is in danger of being broken. He must not forget all about the pet left in the stay position. The extended stay is best taught after the down command too has been perfected. I will soon tell you more on this. It is better if it stays put for a few minutes before being asked to get up than if it moves on its own and thereby disobeying the order. If a pup gets used to breaking the command due to the trainers negligence then flaws will develop in the training.

Come

The next thing that the pup needs to learn is to return to you on command. The best technique for this is to use its own natural exuberance. The only criterion to teach it to come to you is that it should respond to its name. When you see it sitting a little distance away extend both your hands (as you would for a young toddler) and call its name aloud. As it reaches you fold your arms so that it gets maximum body contact with you. A food treat along with this will soon teach it to respond to the command 'come'.

Another method is to take a long leash and make the pup sit down. Repeat the command 'stay' and move backwards. After some time give the leash a gentle tug and call it towards yourself. The moment it starts walking keep

repeating 'Come' till it reaches you. At this point praise it and give it the food treat. This command needs perfection before you can take it out for walks without a leash. Keep trying to call it within the house, without keeping it on a leash and with various distractions till you are sure it will respond positively each time. At this stage gradually take it out on a leash initially and repeat the training process. In the final stage, take it to a closed park, try calling it to come back to you. If it responds then it can be trusted to walk without a leash.

The most important part of teaching the pet recall is to make the experience pleasurable. If it is happy to be with you each time it is recalled the command will be learnt faster. Never aggressively or sternly ask it to come back. Similarly never hit it once it returns to you. I have seen many people recalling their pet to punish it. One mistake I myself used to make earlier was to call my pet to give it medicines! Slowly I found that it did not respond to my recall commands. Since my dog found out that on my calling it, its mouth was forced open and a bitter pill popped in, it slowly decided to stay away when I called it back! If you want to medicate your pet go to it rather than calling it to you.

Down

Teaching a pup to lie down is practically an extension of the sit command. Keep it on your left with the leash in your left hand and the treat in your right hand. Make the pup sit down. Next as it watches the treat in your right hand extend this arm to the ground level without letting it get up. To maintain eye contact with the treat it will begin to slide forwards towards the extended arm. As it is sliding forward the trainer must use the command 'Down'. Once it has extended itself fully forward and is lying down let it have the treat. Repeat and practice the command regularly.

There is another technique to teach it to lie down. Keep it to your left. Hold the collar with your left hand and

using your right arm pull the legs forward. As it slides repeat the command 'down' (Plate 18). As mentioned a little earlier to teach extended stay without supervision it is best to leave the pup in a down and stay position. This way it is comfortably seated next to the trainer. For an animal to obey a command it has to be relaxed. This will ensure that its full attention is with the trainers command. An uncomfortably seated animal will try to run away or break the given instructions at the first possible chance.

Heel on a Leash

Among all the commands a pup is taught during the basic obedience training, I consider this to be of the greatest value. This command will go a long way in making walking with your adult dog very easy. With the command 'Heel' the handler can ensure that it is he who takes the dog for a walk and not vice versa. The basic concept of teaching the exuberant pup this command is that it should walk on the handlers left without straining on its leash (Plate 19). In a house where it is the duty of the young children to take their large pets for a walk, this command will be of immense value.

To teach a pup to walk on heel it should comfortably walk on a leash. It should also not be scared of the road or be too distracted in the park. If you feel that it cannot concentrate in a busy area then it is better to first practice this command in a quiet room. Keep it on your left with the leash in your right hand. Walk slowly with it and if it tries to run ahead give a gentle jerk on the leash. The strength of the jerk will be proportional to its sensitivity. After the pup has walked ten steps properly a food treat can be given using your right hand. Repeat the command sparingly and keep it at the level of your left thigh or left knee. Even the food treat must be used as minimally as possible as the attention of the animal will else always be on it.

After each correction given in Heel, use the left hand to pat its head to make it feel good. If it pulls too much and

tries to run, a quick jerk to get it back in step is warranted. The moment it gets back in position use the left hand and praise it. To make a turn to the right show the pup the treat concealed in your hand. As it follows your hand turn to the right. To take a left turn the trainer must quicken his step and make the pet walk slowly. If it tries to pull take a quick right turn to get it back in step. Keep turning right each time the pup pulls as this makes the trainer and the pup fall in line. Do not follow a fixed pattern and instead keep turning and walking in different directions till it gets used to walking without pulling.

There are two basic kinds of behaviour that dogs could exhibit while learning to walk in heel. Some will pull the leash and act dominant. Here this training technique must be practiced regularly till the trainer is sure that his trainee will not tug at a leash during the walk. If the pup does try to pull or run, the 'heel' command must be reiterated. The second kind of trainee will lag behind. They are more difficult to train as they lack self-confidence. Such animals need to be trained with a lot of love and persuasion. The choke chain should be avoided in these animals. The final part of heel on leash is that the moment the trainer stops walking, the pup too must stop and sit down. This is called 'sit at heel'.

Heel Without Leash

This can be taught to a dog that has mastered 'Heel'. However teaching the pet this command is a little more complicated. The reason is that the trainer needs to be extra careful that the animal does not run away the moment it gets distracted in the middle of a road. In theory the correct way to teach heel without leash is to first walk with the trainee on leash for a short time. After it is used to this and is walking calmly without straining, remove the leash. Next keep the treat and the loose end of the leash in the right hand. The pup's attention will be on the treat and will walk in heel. The trainer is expected to keep repeating

the command at regular intervals.

If however the trainee is over exuberant and loves to explore then there could be a problem. In such a case it will try and run away at the first chance it gets. The trainer needs to stay focused and the moment it attempts to run, a sharp whack using the loose end of the nylon chain on the hindquarters is warranted. This must be followed by the command 'Heel'. The instant it gets this sharp hit and hears the command it will associate the pain with its aborted plan to run. It will come back to the trainer for solace who is then expected to lavishly praise it. The main criterion is the timing. If the dog is however not able to properly correlate between the punishment and the cause, we could have a problem. The best trainers are those whose reflexes are better than that of the pup. Instantaneous correction followed by lavish praise is the best way to train it.

These are generally the commands a trainer teaches under a Basic Obedience course. However at my clinic the trainers also teach a few other things like speaking on command, food refusal and retrieving objects under basic obedience. Some people may like this to be a part of advanced training and may do so.

Speaking and Becoming Quiet on Command

I remember a time when I went to one of the Army stud farms. There were a few trainers with their dogs. I was playing with one of the Alsatian dogs that sat quietly on the side without any signs of aggression. Suddenly in a flash this docile animal bared its teeth and started barking, seemingly ready to attack! I nearly had a heart attack that day! I turned around to see the trainers and my friends rolling in laughter. They had made the trainer give his dog a signal to bark!

Some dogs learn to bark on command very easily. In my personal experience I have found that breeds like the Boxer and Labrador are more difficult to teach to speak on command. Other guard dogs like the Alsatian and the

Dobermann hardly need any persuasion to start barking. There are many ways to teach a dog this command. The easiest is to use their natural instincts. Any pup would wait anxiously for its food. Tie it up and keep the food bowl in front of it. As it tries to eat remove the bowl. The frustration of the hunger combined with the inability to eat will make it bark. Immediately praise it and let it eat. Repeat the exercise occasionally during meal times and use a command like 'Bark or Speak or Guard'. If this is done at every feeding session it will soon get used to the frustration and wait patiently till you give up.

There are some other simple techniques to force a pup to speak on command. The first is to tie it up on a fence and to pretend to leave the area. The anxiety of being left alone will make it bark. The moment the vocalisation starts the trainer should come back and give the command to speak. If it continues to bark the trainer should praise it and give a food treat. Another way is to tie it to a fence and to make another dog bark. Hearing the second dog it may also start to speak. The house bell may be used as a training tool. Most dogs will bark the moment the bell rings. The trainer can make an assistant ring the bell. As soon as it begins to bark the trainer can reinforce the command verbally. My dog trainer who has worked in the Army has yet another way of teaching this command. He pulls and pinches their lips and makes them bark. Simultaneously he uses a hand signal with the verbal command. This has indeed worked in some obstinate animals that have otherwise refused to bark. Since there is a degree of pain involved in this last method it should be employed only if everything else fails.

Some dogs after starting to bark will not stop! I know of a few households where the dog yaps just as long as the guest is in the house. This can be a source of embarrassment to most people. To teach a pup to stop barking first it needs to learn to speak on command as mentioned above. Now the moment it has started speaking with a firm 'Quiet' make it stop barking. Most will initially refuse and continue

to speak. The trainer must then use the command 'No'. The moment it stops even for a second it should be given a food treat along with lots of praise.

Alternate the 'speak and quiet' sessions regularly till the pup is well versed in these. The next stage as the Army trainer used on me is to use only hand signals. This will help you make it speak on command even if you are at a distance. The 'speak on command' is a valuable tool to protect your house. Though some people would include this under advance training I feel that all guard dogs must learn this as part of basic obedience.

Holding An Object

One of the most interesting aspects of dog training is to teach them to retrieve objects. The first part of retrieval is to teach a pup to hold an object in its mouth. The object that is chosen to be held must be something that it will now chew or destroy. It must also not be edible. The best object that could be selected is a rolled up newspaper as it is easy to hold and also light-weight. This is not something that the pet is likely to destroy at home.

Teasing it and playing with the rolled up paper will make the animal interested in it. Then the pup must be made to sit down and the paper placed in its mouth. Care should be taken that no pain should be inflicted on the trainee. Keep its head straight and press the mouth. Repeat the command 'Hold' and after half a minute remove the object from the mouth and give a food treat. Continue to make it hold the object interspersing this with a lot of praise.

In case it refuses to hold a paper try making it hold up its favourite toy. Some breeds due to their anatomy find it difficult to hold objects in their mouth. All dogs like the Boxer with a short pug face find holding objects difficult. Breeds like the Alsatian and the Dobermann find this exercise easy.

Once you have perfected this command we can

proceed to the next stage. Here the pup is expected to start picking up the object from the floor. Use the same object that it is used to holding in its mouth. Now make it sit down and then bring the object near its mouth. As it tries to grab the object slowly lower it to the floor. It should be able to maintain eye contact with the object at all times. As soon as it sees it on the floor it will try and bend down and grab it. The moment this happens praise it and repeat the command 'Hold'.

I have a client whose mixed breed dog is well trained in this exercise and can go to the market and get a loaf of bread! The grocer knows what the dog with the empty basket needs and complies immediately!

Retrieving An Object

A pup that has learnt the command 'hold' will easily pick up the command 'Fetch'. All dogs have a natural prey instinct wherein they will chase and grab any moving object. It is this instinct that the trainer will develop in this training session. The pup must be taken to a park where there is no distraction. Next it is made to sit down and hold the object to be retrieved in its mouth. After this the object is removed from the mouth and at eye level of the animal thrown far away with the command fetch. A gentle push on the hindquarters will make the pup run faster after the flying object. The moment it reaches the object that has been thrown, a loud 'Good boy, Fetch' is warranted. Most dogs will bring the object back to the trainer.

The next stage is equally important where the pup is expected to give the object back. Most will continue to prance and play with it. When the trainee comes back make it sit and place a food treat near its nose with the command 'Drop' simultaneously. This way it will drop the object and correlate it with the command to drop the object. Repeat the training till it learns to fetch and drop on command. One thing that the trainer must remember is that he should never chase the pet while asking it to

retrieve. This will only make it take the exercise as a game and run further away. Instead running backwards in the opposite direction and simultaneously calling it will make it come to you.

If the pup refuses to pick an object after chasing it then the 'Hold' command has not been perfected. Go back to the previous session and repeat the training to hold an object. If it refuses to return then the recall training needs strengthening. The best way to make a pup chase the thrown object is to use its own toy. If the dog is well trained in these commands you can make it fetch your morning newspaper or even your slippers! (Plate 20).

Food Refusal

One of the most important things that a dog must learn is to accept food only from the trainer or owner. This needs a lot of training as it conflicts the most basic training tool utilised i.e. food itself. However with a little effort the animal soon begins to recognise what it can eat and what it should not touch. This training will be of great value in preventing the guard dog from accepting food from strangers. Quite often we hear of how robbers poison guard dogs by offering meat.

This training should be started only after all the basic obedience training sessions have been perfected. Initially the dog can be made to walk in heel and food objects placed in its path. If it tries to bend and eat the treat then a gentle tug at the collar with a stern 'No' will be of value. At the end of the walk after it has refused or ignored all the food items in its route it needs to be praised and given a treat. In the next stage the assistant trainer must keep a biscuit in his extended hand. If the dog tries to eat it then a tug on the collar followed by repetition of 'No' is required. Vary the treats extended by the trainer till it learns to ignore all the food offered to it.

The final part of this training is when the pup has a long twenty-foot leash tied to it and left alone in the park.

The trainer keeps out of sight and lets it explore the region on its own. The park should have lots of treats interspersed at different places. The moment it attempts to eat any item a gentle tug will help him stop. The trainer must be very vigilant and should observe his trainee's movements carefully. My trainer taught my Boxer to refuse a biscuit kept near it. It was pathetic to see him drool but not eat the treat till the trainer gave a green signal to do so. Finally the trainer kept the biscuit on my dog's nose and yet he would not eat the biscuit!

Bow and Salute

I have kept these commands at the end because as I have mentioned earlier some people don't want 'circus animals'. However I feel that it does make a dog look smart when it salutes on command. If however there are people who disagree they can ignore this section.

To make a dog salute first let it sit properly on its haunches. After this keep the left hand on the collar and raise its front two legs with the right hand. Repeat the command 'Salute' as you keep the legs raised. Slowly in due course remove the support of the hands but keep the left arm on the collar (Plate 21). If it attempts to sit down give a small jerk with this hand. In this training it's only a matter of time before it learns to balance itself.

To teach a dog to Bow or Bend is equally easy. For this it must be well versed in the command Down. Make it lie in the down position and then keep the left hand on the collar. Use the right hand to pull the body up under the stomach. This way the head and chest of the pup are in contact with the ground and the hindquarters are raised (Plate 22). After a few sessions remove the support of the right arm. As soon as it completes the command give it a food treat.

This entire chapter on obedience training is quite simple to carry out once the trainer and the pup form a strong bond of understanding between themselves. The key to success is patience and not to get irritated or

flustered. The minimum period a pup should be trained is four months initially. After this it is the job of the family to continue to use the commands regularly at home. Often one gets to see a professional trainer teaching the pup. He does manage to teach all that is required and yet the owner cannot control it. This is because the owner has not mastered the commands himself. The last month of the training session must have both the trainer and the family involved. This way the dog learns to accept the commands of the family also. Training is not for a specified period and all commands must be reinforced routinely to maintain the desired level of learning. At the end of this chapter I am writing about a new style of training that is coming up. This has yet to find too many followers here in India but in theory is a very effective technique.

Clicker Training

To some it's a fad and does not match the time tested normal training in dogs as mentioned above. But in theory the clicker training is a very sensible approach to training. The clicker is a toy clicker that makes a clicking noise each time it is pressed. This is the kind of instrument the ticket conductor uses in the Mumbai bus when he asks the passenger for bus fare. The average bus commuter associates the clicking sound with the requirement of buying a ticket.

It is a similar approach in dogs. The clicker training is based on a hundred per cent positive reinforcement system. Each time the dog performs well the trainer clicks the clicker and gives a treat. Here there is no physical or verbal punishment. Those actions that are appreciated by the trainer warrant a click and subsequent treat. All the trainer needs to do is to watch for the good actions give a click, vocal command and then pat it or give a food treat. The dog slowly learns that the clicking sound is for something good that they have done. This training technique needs more patience and observatory skills than the normal technique.

The success of clicker training is evident from the fact that in the West it has been used for decades to train dolphins and other marine animals. Since one could not use a choke chain and leash on a dolphin, some other technique was needed! This is where the trainers used the clicker to reinforce all the good behaviour. In due course they began to respond to the commands and the sound of the clicker. Watch any animal channel on cable television to see the successful training of these wonderful creatures of the sea. If they can be trained so can dogs.

I can give an example to differentiate the two techniques. If a pup were to jump up on a stranger when he entered the house, in the conventional style the collar would be given a jerk followed by a stern reprimand. In the clicker training system the trainer waits for the pup to sit down and then clicks and treats. The first system used a little force and negative reinforcement. The second waited for the good behaviour of the pup to be given a positive signal.

To begin clicker training the pup must be attuned to the clicking noise. The best place that is suggested to begin the training is the kitchen or wherever it gets its food. All animals will look at you just before mealtime. At this stage call them by their name and if they continue to look at you click and treat. Call someone to distract the pup. Then the trainer himself should call out and if it looks at him repeat the clicking and treating procedure. Continue this till it realises that the moment you call, its looking at you means a clicking noise followed by a tasty treat. Once this level of training is attained the subsequent lessons are simple. Keep varying the treat with food treats, verbal praise or just a good pat. This way the training will not get over dependent on food.

The remaining techniques of training are fairly similar to the ones mentioned above except that one does not physically push the pup down. Instead it is lured to the desired position that is followed by a click and treat. I can

explain this with the training technique for 'Sit'. First let it be free near you. Keep a treat in your right hand and the clicker in the left. As soon as it comes near you let it smell the tasty treat in your right hand. Most pups will sit down in order to get the treat. If this happens click and treat. Others may try to lick your hand and get the treat. In such a scenario the trainer must raise his hand above the pup's level so that in order to maintain visual contact it is forced to sit down. The moment it does so, click and treat. Repeat this with oral commands, till it learns to sit down.

Clicker training can teach a dog just about anything. Quite a few owners have a traumatic time getting their pup's nails trimmed. In this clicker system of training the nail cutter is allowed to lie on the floor for a few days. The pup walks around it and is comfortable in its presence. Next the cutter is kept near the food bowl where it spends a lot of time and experiences joy. In the third stage the cutter is brought in contact with its body and if it does not get angry click and treat. Subsequently place the cutter on a nail and if it remains calm click and treat! Repeat this on all the nails till it understands that the clipper placed on the paw brings the clicking sound followed by a tasty treat. In the last stage cut a nail and immediately click and treat.

Clicker training is all about dogs being made to realise their good deeds that are followed by positive reinforcement. It may take a little longer to train them in comparison to the conventional methods but the results are supposed to be excellent. If the reader has lots of patience and does not like to physically punish the pup then this is the best training method.

SITUATIONAL TRAINING

'Doctor my dog behaves well at home but not at your clinic' or 'My dog is very well behaved except when another dog comes near it'. These are a few of the statements that I routinely hear at the clinic from my clients. They may have spent a small fortune on training but still find themselves flustered by their pet's occasional misbehaviour. In this chapter I have aimed at giving the average dog owner a few simple tips to overcome such behaviour. It is best if the owner can teach the pet well before the bad behaviour becomes a habit for then correction will be more difficult. More on correction of bad behaviour is written in the next chapter.

Travelling by Car

Most owners who have dogs have to at some time of their lives take them out in a car. For the lucky few whose animals love a car ride this is easy. But quite a few hate car travel. It is therefore important to train the young pup to learn to enjoy a car ride. I know of a few dogs that bark all the way from their homes to my clinic. Initially they bark out of enthusiasm but later it becomes a whine. The owners are able to tolerate this behaviour when the animals are pups. But the adult dog barking in a closed car can make life miserable for any owner.

Why do some dogs then enjoy a ride while others dread the very sight of a car? A lot lies in the way the owners have handled them as pups. The first car ride is always invariably when the pup is separated from its

original pack. It suddenly loses its family and the warmth of its mother. Next it is put in a car that makes loud and perplexing noises. The jerks and bumps make it even more uncomfortable. All this then makes it feel that the immediate cause of all its sorrows is the car!

There is a simple way to lessen the initial trauma. The owner must sit with the pup in the back seat and constantly talk to it. It can be kept in a basket with a few of its toys. A cloth that has the mothers scent too can be kept in this basket. If the new family pats it then the feeling of insecurity lessens. Some breeders also give the pup a tranquiliser to ease the discomfort of the first journey. Always keep it on the back seat, as this is the place you want it to stay as an adult. Avoid taking it to a vet on its first trip in a car as this adds to the mental trauma. Dogs that are taken only to the vet during car rides slowly learn to correlate between the two.

Just as some humans feel nausea during a journey, pets too feel the effects of motion sickness. The first signs that a pup is feeling nauseous are if it begins to drool and hyperventilate. Such an animal needs medication for motion sickness. Initially let it take a short ride in the car on a daily basis. This can be just around the block or to a nearby park. In due course increase the length of the ride with constant observation of the pet. If it begins to feel uncomfortable stop for a while before proceeding. It is best if it is fed after the ride to minimise the chances of its throwing up.

Dark window panes help in lowering the heat stress the animal feels. Its toys in the back seat or a chew bone to keep itself busy can be of value. In case it is destructive a loose fitting muzzle will help. Prevent it from getting bored and keep the windows partially open. It is not safe for a pup to keep its head out fully as there are chances of its head getting injured or some dust entering its eye. A well-trained and well-acclimatised dog will be satisfied to keep its nose outside and get the constantly varying smells.

There are generally three forms of misbehaviour

during a ride. In the first case the pup is destructive during the travel. This can be overcome by keeping it busy and by having an assistant to sit alongside in the back seat. This will also help in preventing it from barking all the way. A small treat if it stops barking on command will slowly make it stop this behaviour. In the second situation if the animal is left in the car alone it shows excessive anxiety within the car. This is because it gets frustrated being left alone. The cure for this is to hide behind the car and the moment it begins to vocalise and vent its frustration, to come back and scold it. If it relaxes praise it and hide again. Repeat this till it begins to correlate that it is punished for barking and praised for staying quiet. One important instruction at this point is never to leave it in a fully closed car as it may get a heat stroke. Five minutes during summer in a stuffy cramped car on a hot afternoon can predispose it to a heat stroke. Roll down the windows a little to keep the ventilation normal.

The last kind of misbehaviour is when the pup jumps out of the car first as soon as the door is opened. This puts it at a risk of an accident apart from breaking the basic training principles. Earlier in the last chapter I have mentioned that the pack leader gets to do everything first. When it jumps out before the owner it is unintentionally proving its dominance. To maintain your superiority ensure that you always alight first from the car. This will also help it in understanding basic obedience training principles. A properly trained dog is one that loves car travel and can accompany you on all your short vacations (Plate 23).

Veterinary Check-ups and Medications

The most common place for the pup to show poor training is at the veterinary clinic. Let us analyse the reasons for this from its point of view. The first thing that owners do after picking up a new pup from a kennel is to get a vet's opinion. This involves waiting at the clinic that has the smell of other dominant animals and also of other

disinfectants. To a new pup all this can be very scary! Apart from this some older dogs may be howling or another pet may jump at it. Add to this the trauma of the vet examining it and it has had enough! He decides that the owner seems to be bearable but the veterinary clinic should be on top of its blacklist.

Unfortunately the first five or six visits are to the vet for various vaccinations. This means that each time it comes to the clinic it experiences pain. A few tips can help the owner to make these and subsequent visits pleasant for the pup. The first trip made by it should be when the vet is totally free and there are no other dogs. This helps in reducing the stress that it may feel. Secondly avoid vaccinating the pup on the very first visit and probably instead get it a chew bone. Let it play with this at the clinic so that it feels good. Most vets have treats for their patients like dog biscuits and these should be given during the initial examination to keep its mind fully occupied. At my clinic we give puppies dog food to eat while we vaccinate them. This diverts their attention and they hardly feel the pain of the injection.

The owner needs to do basic homework before taking his pet to the vet. As mentioned earlier the dog's body is its personal space and they do not like human intervention here. Because of this they will resist being touched or groomed. To reduce this form of dominance the owner must teach it to accept grooming without a fuss. He must also teach it to accept a stranger or a family friend to comb it. The dog should be trained to stand still for about five minutes without moving on a table. This way it gets used to unknown touches, so the vet will also be able to examine it. Use some disinfectant at home during the daily mopping to ensure that it is used to the smells of the clinic.

The pup also needs to be trained to wear a muzzle. I have always advocated the usage of the nylon mouth muzzles as they are economical and can be cleaned after every use. A dog that accepts wearing a muzzle knows

that the owner is more dominant and hence it will not create a fuss. Wearing a muzzle also helps at the clinic where it may bite out of fear. Another form of training that is essential for any pup is to learn to eat tablets. Most adult dogs will resist having a hand shoved down their throats to feed medications. This habit needs to be inculcated in the young pup. Calcium or other vitamin capsules can be used to train it. First draw its attention towards yourself. Next place a treat inside and then close the mouth. This way the pup has allowed you to place something and then to firmly grasp its mouth. After gaining its confidence the owner must move on to capsules and tablets. A dog trained to eat oral medications will save you a lot of time going to the vet later for daily shots during treatment.

Being 'Home Alone'

Quite a few would think that the super hit Hollywood movie series *Home Alone* was exaggerated. However many dog owners can affirm that disaster is possible even if a pup is left alone at home! The potential of damage that a bored or insecure animal can create is unimaginable. The frustration it feels will be vented on the furniture, carpets, pillows etc. (Plate 24). Apart from this some start howling or barking and this makes life miserable for the neighbours. The owner who plans to leave his pet alone during the day needs to train it accordingly.

The first day it comes to your house is the most crucial as mentioned earlier in the book. It must learn to spend some time in its box alone especially at night. To make it feel good keep an old clock that makes a ticking sound below the bedding. This noise will make it feel comfortable. Toys, chew bones or a cloth with the smell of the mother too will keep it content within the box. Nobody should come near the box at night after it has been placed no matter how much noise it creates. If the owner gives in and goes to calm it a major battle will be lost as the next time it will wail even longer in anticipation of receiving attention.

The same principles apply while leaving it alone during the day. During the puppy stage leave it in its box for an hour at a stretch so that it accepts being isolated. Next leave the house for the same duration but do not excite it when you are leaving it or coming back. If it has got used to staying alone in its box for some time it will not mind your occasional absence. In the next stage increase the length of time that you stay out. Make sure that before leaving, your pet has been given his food and taken out for all its jobs.

In case the house has been turned upside down during your absence do not throw a tantrum or punish it. Remember all that the pup knows is the sense of joy of your return. It is unable to correlate that the cause of the shouting is because it has been bad. Instead it will feel that the punishment is because it has come running happily to you. It will then be wary of showing its happiness the next time you come home.

To correct the behaviour will need an understanding as to why it has misbehaved. One reason could be that it has suffered from separation anxiety. Any pet will begin to correlate between events in the house. It realises that the moment you pick up your briefcase or handbag and the car keys it is going to be left alone for hours at a stretch. Add to this the extra attention that you lavish it before leaving and it begins to feel more desperate. Research has shown that the maximum damage by dogs at home is within the first twenty minutes of being left alone. After this it begins to settle down and accept the situation. The solution then here is to show no extra affection (that serves only to assuage your own guilt) before leaving for work.

Leave the house and enter after a minute to catch any errant behaviour. If it is tearing your pillows punish it instantaneously. This is the only way to correct its destructive habits. Repeat this at varying time intervals so that the pup begins to feel that you may enter at any time to punish it. It will slowly correlate that the punishment is because it

has been destructive. Leaving a tape with your own voice or some soothing music may also help in keeping it calm. The moment you come back ignore the exuberance shown by it and instead take it out to relieve itself.

The other reason why an adult dog is destructive is because it is bored! Keep it occupied and it will lose this habit. A tired pet has little energy for bad behaviour. Keep it fully exercised so that when it is left alone it will prefer to sleep. Lots of toys of its own and raw hide bones will keep it stimulated. Ensure that during the training sessions the pet is able to differentiate between its own toys and those that are out of bounds. This will make sure that the pup sticks to playing only with its own toys. Those owners who plan to leave their pets alone for long periods during the day must take this section seriously.

No Entry Zones

In most houses owners do not like their dogs to enter some particular area. This could be the kitchen, the small garden in front of the house or the prayer room. It is very important to teach the pet to respect the rules of the house and therefore not to enter these forbidden zones. The kitchen is probably the most difficult area to make the pup understand not to enter. The aroma of the food and the fact that its food comes from inside make it eager to enter.

To train the pup is not very difficult provided everybody in the house follow the rules. If one member permits it inside and another does not, the animal is left confused. Keep it on a long leash and throw a ball around the house. Let it chase it and retrieve it for you. Next throw the ball in the no entry area and the moment the pup chases it, a stern 'No' followed by a gentle tug on the leash is required. If it stops the chase, praise it and give a food treat. Retrieve the ball for it to play and continue the game. For every throw into a no entry area at least five normal chases must be allowed. This way it does not feel that it is punished without cause.

The same technique is used for the garden. The pup is allowed to chase the ball or toy bone everywhere except the garden. If it attempts to cross into this region it needs negative reinforcement. But the rules must never be bent and the trainer must be ready for instantaneous correction if he spots his trainee breaking the rules. The kitchen must be kept closed when the trainer is not around to prevent it from entering when left alone. Scavenging is often first learnt from the kitchen garbage can.

The Puppy at the Park

There are a few sights as pleasurable or comparable to that of a puppy enjoying itself at the local park. This is a great opportunity for the young one to expend its excess energy and to also meet new people. The tendency to explore also makes it to come in contact with other dogs. This needs proper supervision as a more dominant animal may scare or actually injure the young pet. The more it interacts and plays with people and dogs the more it learns to socialise. Those pets that get to socialise in their puppyhood grow up to be mature canine citizens. Before taking it to the park be sure to practice the recall or come back lessons well at home. Catching the nimble footed pup that has run away after something it likes is practically impossible.

The first thing that it must learn is the acceptable behaviour at the park. The owner is advised to let it interact only with other friendly dogs. If it meets a vicious canine that tries to bite it then it may start fearing other dogs for life. Similarly try and get the children to play games that do not hurt. Tug of war using the pup, as a rope will make it snap. Healthy games include playing with a ball that stimulates its instinct to chase. Games where the children run in front and enjoy being chased teach it a wrong lesson. Here the pet learns that chasing children is acceptable behaviour.

The owner needs to decide upfront what he expects his pup to turn out to be. If he wants it to be friendly as an

adult then it needs lots of socialisation lessons. If he wants it to remain aloof then it is best if it does not interact with too many people. Keeping it tied up under the staircase will make it aggressive. In my view it is best to have a friendly dog especially in those houses that have young children.

The basic training that a pup requires at the park is to learn not to rush off towards other dogs and never to chase people. Not everybody is a dog lover and some people are scared of them. Keep it on a long twenty-foot leash and let it have a good run in the park. If a strange dog approaches then pull the leash towards yourself. Let the two animals smell each other but be attentive for any signs of aggression on either side. The moment you spot some anger pull it away. Dog-fights start in a few seconds and it is very difficult to extricate your pet from one without getting bitten. Keep the food treats ready and praise your pup the moment it listens to your commands among all the commotion in the crowded park.

TACKLING BAD HABITS

I have always felt that 'Prevention is better than cure'. It is a fact that dogs learn by habit and bad habits are very difficult to break. However quite a few people are unable to train their pets correctly and here I will try to define the commonly encountered vices and their possible solutions. At this stage I would like to make it clear that the owner has to be clear of the ABC's of the problem as mentioned earlier in the book. The Antecedent (A) that is followed by the perceived Behaviour (B) and the Consequence (C). If the owner is unable to detect the right antecedent he may never find the correct solution.

A good example of this problem is of a dog barking excessively in the backyard. The actual antecedent may be someone poking it with a stick. The resultant behaviour is that it shows aggression and starts barking. The consequence is that each time that person appears near the fence it starts to bark! (Plate 25) Now unless the owner is able to understand that the barking is due to the offender's presence, he will never be able to control the situation. Every dog shows a particular behaviour due to some stimulus. Get rid of the cause and the resultant behaviour too will eventually cease.

I would not lay the blame fully on the owner's inability to train the dog always. Some dogs like humans are more dominant by nature. It is inbuilt in them to revolt. But even these animals can be controlled to a great extent by firm handling. If such a pet fails to be trained then it will be a source of problem for life. However eighty per cent of

all problems are due to the owner not curbing or controlling natural canine instincts. Guarding, chasing, protection are some of the inbuilt behavioural characteristics of a canine. If these are not controlled or if the owner accentuates them by mistake, the dog will learn to misbehave.

Another common example that is seen is of a person walking his pup. The dog has it inbuilt within it to chase other dogs and to protect its master. Suddenly a mongrel appears in front of the two walking sedately. The owner in his urge to protect his pet shouts at the mongrel hoping it runs away. He may even throw a small stone at it. All this excites the pup that has been calm till now. To the pet it is now clear that since its owner or the pack head has tried to make the mongrel run away, it should do the same. So it starts to pull at the leash and bark aggressively. The owner has without his own knowledge sown the seeds of a future behavioural problem. He has given it the license to chase and show aggression towards another canine.

Do not legitimise any behaviour that you think could cause problems for you later. As mentioned previously the pup must be able to differentiate between its own property and what does not belong to him. A common mistake that many owners make is that of allowing their pets on the bed. As a pup a small Alsatian looks cute and does not take too much space. However the same adult could take up half the bed. At this stage if you expect it to get off and sleep on the floor it is difficult. I know of many dogs that have bitten their owners in a savage manner when they were made to get off the bed. Since at this stage most owners would back off after getting bitten, the dogs just gained confidence and showed more aggression the next time. Here I would not blame the pet that has started taking the bed as his own property. It is the owner who allowed it to share the bed in the first place who is to blame for the present predicament.

The last thing of course is to understand the breed itself. All medium to large breed dogs need lots of exercise.

Research has shown that an average street dog walks or runs five to ten kilometers per day. If this is the case with a street dog then one can well imagine how much exercise an energetic adult pure breed fed nutritious food needs! It is impossible for such an animal to burn its calories with two or three sedate walks a day. Apart from the medical fear of such animals from being prone to the modern day scourge of obesity, their excess energy will be utilised within the house. In the modern day nuclear family with double income parents working full time and the children going to school and for tuitions, the pet feels bored and ignored. Boredom remains a major cause of canine misbehaviour. This means that they will either turn aggressive or destructive to show their frustration.

Good management and sensible training are the corner-stones of efficient dog keeping. I now move on to the most common canine behavioural problems and how the owner can try to handle it. This if frankly easier said than done but with lots of patience solutions can be found. The owner must understand that he is faced with a language barrier and a newly developed bad habit. He needs to overcome the former and find clues to what has started the latter.

Problems Due to Dog's Natural Instincts

As mentioned earlier some dogs have a strong prey and fight instinct. These animals will also try to dominate the pack. The novice owner will find that training these animals is very difficult. Help of a professional trainer may be sought to prevent development of the following problems.

Guarding

It is natural for the dog to guard its house as it is part of its territory. For ages man has bred it for this purpose. If one looks back into the domestication of the canine, it is seen that man first kept them to guard their villages and

flocks of livestock. Genetically guarding has been inbuilt in the modern day dog. In fact most people who keep these pets expect them to guard their house. Some breeds like the Alsatian have a much stronger instinct than others.

In the animals where this instinct is too strong do we find that aberrations in the behaviour develop. Some animals tend to guard their own possessions and show aggression if their owners come near them (Plate 26). This could be in the form of a growl when a child comes near its feeding bowl. Others will bite if members of the family try to get it off the furniture. Both are unacceptable from the point of view that this is an overt form of dominance shown by the pet.

I have mentioned earlier that the pack head has first rights over everything. If the owner has proven his dominance then he will be able to lift the feeding bowl or take any possession that belongs to the pet like its toys, chews, bed, water bowl etc. If the pet has proved his dominance then he will rule the house and create trouble. Handling this kind of behaviour has two simple rules—simple in theory but sometimes difficult to practice. First if a pup shows aggression then it should be nipped in the bud. If the owner backs off when the challenge is shown then he has failed to prove his dominance. Secondly the punishment must be instantaneous and the attention given to the pet withdrawn by isolating it. When it is isolated it sends a very strong message that it has committed a big mistake.

Let me begin by giving a few tips to control aggression shown when the owner approaches the food bowl. If the problem is in the initial stages the pup must be grasped by the scruff of its neck and a firm 'No' command should be given. Tie it up and ignore it for a while. Let it go back to its food bowl and repeat the exercise if needed. However if it has got used to growling or biting and the owner wishes to control the behaviour, a different approach is needed. First keep it tied on a leash and feed a bland diet

like boiled rice. Next approach it with a tasty treat like a biscuit or piece of boiled egg and throw it into the bowl. Subsequently keep coming closer with food treats till it waits in anticipation of your adding something to the bowl. In about three sessions it will sit and await your coming to the bowl.

To get it off furniture is similar. The first rule of course is to totally discourage it from getting onto a chair or bed as a pup. If it tries to bite you when you ask it to get off then as above in the early stages grab it, verbally reprimand it and then isolate it for a short time. If it has got used to sitting on the bed then leave a long leash on all day. This will help you get distance control over it. After tugging and forcing it off the bed leave a food treat on the ground. This is a kind of negative reinforcement training. Another possible situation is when the owner does not have the leash in his hand and instead stands in front of it and orders it to get off. If it does not get down, then a food treat is given to lure it off. This is not an acceptable way to train. Here psychologically the owner has lost, as the pup did not come down when ordered. Instead he had to be given a bribe to listen. In the first case the owner had proved his dominance and then given the food treat.

The pack has only one leader who is duty bound to guard his belongings and the pack. If the canine begins to think that he is the leader then problems will arise. To effectively control guarding associated problems the owner has to prove that he is the boss.

Mounting and Sexual Behaviours

Domesticated dogs hardly ever get a chance to mate. In the wild the strongest male will get a chance every time the female in its pack comes to heat. Due to modern day breeding programs where only the best male is selected as a stud, others rarely get a chance to cross. After it reaches sexual maturity it often tends to mount, clasp and masturbate on the owners legs. This is totally normal from

the canine reproductive point of view but can be a source of great social embarrassment. Other sexual behaviours include territory marking, aggression towards other animals and possessiveness. These are dealt with later.

The first thing that the owner needs to do is to prevent his pup from climbing onto his legs. This will also prevent it from learning to jump on visitors later in life. Secondly at puberty if it starts mounting leave a leash on it to pull it off. Do not touch or talk to it at this stage, as any physical contact will excite it. Isolate and tie it up and ignore it after leaving it later on. The old army style of preventing this behaviour is to push the knee into the pup's chest as it mounts. This gives a firm negative reinforcement but some trainers do not advocate it. I have found that my clients have found using the leash to pull off the pet to be more efficient.

The behaviour if corrected in the initial stages will cease. If this becomes a habit then dogs progress to mounting visitors and other inanimate objects in the house and may be difficult to control. The long-term solution for a dog that has developed this habit is to get it castrated. Castration is the surgical process by which the testicles are removed and this lowers the testosterone or male reproductive hormones.

Chasing Children and Vehicles

Quite a few accidents I have treated are of dogs that have got injured chasing cars. If the car brakes all of a sudden then they may come under its wheels. Nature has taught the canine to chase. This sense is well developed in certain racing breeds like the Greyhound and the Indian Rajapalayam. When a dog is in pursuit of either a vehicle or child there is a surge of adrenaline commonly known as the fight or flight hormone. There is also a sense of achievement especially as most cars do not stop. This gives it a sense of victory that the offender has been chased out of the territory.

The owners themselves on the other hand often teach the pet to chase children. Games at the park often involve children running ahead with the pup trailing behind. The excited children scream and run making the chase all the more interesting. But when it matures into a dog, the children slowly begin to get scared. To the canine however it is difficult to comprehend as to why a game that was so enjoyable has to be curtailed at this stage. Therefore at the first chance it gets it runs back to join the fun and excitement. The same children now get scared and it smells their fear. This excites it even more and the game may have now got out of hand.

To teach a pup not to chase a vehicle needs a trainer who holds it on a long leash and choke chain. A second assistant is needed to cycle past the pup to excite it. As soon as it begins to chase the cyclist the trainer needs to give a sharp tug with a strong 'No'. Simultaneously the cyclist can also stop and throw a small pebble on it using the same command. This double negative reinforcement will scare any pet and prevent it from chasing. If it still persists in the habit the reinforcements need to be continued. An alternate to the pebble could be a water pistol or a can filled with marbles thrown on the ground. The main aim should be to startle it and prevent it from enjoying the thrill of the chase.

Training it not to chase other children and pets also follows the same principle. Another technique that works on positive reinforcement involves making the pet that is kept on a leash interested in a toy. Play with the toy and make it excited. As soon as this occurs throw the toy far away so that the pet chases it. During the chase to retrieve the object the trainer must call it back and show a better toy or a chew bone. At the same time a command like 'Stop' can be given. If the animal comes back to you for the chew bone, praise it and give the treat. Repeat the exercise till you are confident that it will cease to chase on command. The moment it comes back to you make sure that the praise

and treats are lavish. The next stage involves asking a child to run in front of the pet. As it starts to chase give the vocal command to stop. As it listens praise it and give the treat.

Aggression

A dog may show aggression towards other canines, children or towards members of its immediate family. All the three are unacceptable as it may either injure itself or cause others grievous harm. Generally those dogs that have a high fight and prey instinct show aggression out of dominance. On the other hand animals of nervous disposition that have a greater flight instinct show this behaviour out of fear.

Those dogs that have had adequate socialisation as puppies rarely show aggression. The mother and other siblings teach them as to what kind of behaviour is acceptable. If one looks at the various causes of canine aggression the list is rather long. Some dogs are aggressive because they just want to protect their house. This is acceptable as long as they just bark. If they start to bare their teeth or growl then it is unacceptable. Jealousy is also a very common cause especially in members of the same sex. This means that greater chances of rivalry exist theoretically between two male or two female dogs. A male dog will generally not show aggression towards a female but the opposite is very possible! Similarly an adult dog may threaten a puppy but will rarely assault it. Their overt behaviour will however scare the young fellow for life. Jealousy between young children in the house and their pets has also been well documented. If the aggression is due to hormonal causes the male may need to be castrated.

Some dogs that have been with a single member of the family from a very tender age may begin to show aggression towards other people. If a stranger approaches the pup may get very aggressive in an attempt to protect the owner. I have seen great protective instincts in the Alsatian as a breed. The best way to control this is to make

a friend to approach it with a treat. The owner needs to keep it on a leash. Let the friend look in the opposite direction while crouching on the floor. Next he should extend the treat held in his hand. The reason why the second person must sit down and look away is because looking down on it from the top is a sign of dominance that will be met by aggression.

Poor breeding too is a common cause of an animal showing this behaviour. It would have been best if overtly aggressive dogs were not bred. Genetically this instinct is passed between generations and is the reason why some breeds have been successively made more aggressive over the generations. Fear may cause a dog to attack and such animals are of a nervous disposition. Any animal that shrinks backwards when you approach lacks self-confidence. In an attempt to protect itself or for self-defense it may attack others. The other form of this behaviour due to dominance has been discussed above in detail and makes the animal guard its possessions.

The treatment of both categories of aggression either due to dominance or nervousness is the same. The owner needs to clearly enforce his will. He has to prove his supremacy over his pet. The owner should be clear that he is not giving any wrong ideas to his pet. During the walk as discussed above the owner should show no aggression towards other animals. If he does then he will be legitimising his pet's actions of attacking others. The pack leader never loses self-control, as this will jeopardise the security of the entire unit. Therefore it needs to be constantly assured that you are in command. If it gets aggressive out of fear or dominance grab it by the scruff of the neck and while looking into its eyes give a firm command 'No'. This should not be a half-hearted effort and it needs to get the message loud and clear. If you are lucky the dominant pup will try to assert itself once again. This is the moment to repeat the treatment so that the lesson gets ingrained once and for all. I am not asking the trainer or owner to be unkind towards

his pet but it should be clear that discipline has to be maintained at all costs.

The second aspect of lowering aggression due to dominance is to lower the pet's self-esteem. A few simple points mentioned earlier will help. Grooming the dog daily, eating first and making the pup feed later, getting out to walk before the pet all prove your dominance. Never let a pet have its bed in the corner. The smaller the space the more protective it gets. Instead keep the bedding in the middle of the room so that the larger open space makes it less confident. Ignoring the pup occasionally makes it less possessive. Lastly be sure to be able to exert your will by handling its toys, food bowl etc. Remember that in a pack the leader would never tolerate insubordination.

Problems Due to Owner's Mistakes

Sometimes the owner makes mistakes that can trigger canine misbehaviour. Often the family does not know that they are teaching something wrong. One common example is allowing the young pup to jump and greet them. Everybody enjoys this initially but imagine a hundred-kilogram St. Bernard jumping on your visitor! This section deals with these problems that have management as a cause.

Boredom is the chief cause for misbehaviour in canines. Here quite often the owner is responsible for not being able to keep the pet active enough. Like its master the dog too needs a good social life. Being a member of the pack entails that there is always someone to socialize with. However the modern day pet finds itself isolated for long periods because of the hectic work schedules. Returning home to find the house in total disarray will make most owners to conclude that their pets have willfully created trouble. This notion is false, as they have no criminal intent and the problems are caused out of sheer, frustration and boredom.

The fear of impending separation often makes the pup nervous. As mentioned earlier the very sight of the

owner picking up the key is enough to make it realise that the next few hours will be of isolation. Sometimes the misbehaviour is only to seek your attention. There are documented cases of dogs vomiting every morning only to gain their families sympathy! Here the owner needs to minimise the separation anxiety caused by making a quiet departure from the house. Leaving the home without creating any excitement. The more this happens the greater the possibility of misbehaviour. It is best if the pet is ignored before you go to work.

In nervous dogs, lack of self-confidence instigates poor behaviour. The sound of the local milkman may scare some animals that may then destroy the nearest rug out of sheer fear! Dogs are conditioned to respond to sounds and sometimes they get scared of particular noises as pups that are carried forward for life. My Alsatian was an excellent guard capable of guarding the house on his own. But the sound of the balloon seller's whistle in the nearby park made him shiver. Therefore the owner needs to understand the actual reason that makes his pet misbehave. If he can correlate between the antecedent of the noise and the resultant behavioural response, then finding a solution will be possible.

These few tips will help you to leave the house in peace. The early morning schedule should include a heavy workout for the pet. The tired dog has lesser energy for destruction in the house. Then feed it in the morning before going to work. After a heavy meal most animals will prefer to rest for at least a couple of hours. This coincides with the period when the maximum damage is created in the house. Before making a quiet farewell see that it has been taken out for a short walk to conclude its business. Leave the house after giving it a few toys to play with. Now we can have a look at the most common disorders that develop due to a combination of all the factors mentioned above.

Excessive barking can be a social embarrassment for

most owners. It is also irritating for the neighbours who have to tolerate this continuous noise for hours after the owner leaves to work. There are three categories of dogs that bark. The first include those who bark to protect their house. They will bark at strangers and other visitors who try to enter the house. These dogs should not be made to stop barking, as it will affect their natural guarding instincts. The second category includes those that bark out of excitement. The method to handle such animals is mentioned a little later. The last category has those canines that vocalise to gain attention or to vent their frustrations.

To make a dog stop barking it has to be taught how to start barking on command. Both of these have been dealt with in the section on basic obedience training under the heading speaking and becoming quiet on command. Try and catch it vocalising without a cause and then use your commands to cease speaking. The simplest way to keep it quiet is to hide a food treat in your hand held below its nose. A dog that is busy sniffing at a food treat will not be able to bark! The good old method of catching it by its scruff, looking straight into its eyes and giving a stern reprimand also works well. As it stops vocalising give the command 'Quiet' and a food treat. The West has slowly taken to using 'No-Bark' collars to control animals that bark apparently without cause. This has been dealt with earlier in the section on training equipment.

Some owners find that when they come home the pillows and rugs have been torn to shreds. In most cases it is because the dog feels extremely lonely that it has been naughty. There are two ways to control this behaviour. The first is to leave the house and return almost immediately. Since most dogs would have started getting frantic the owner's return reassures them. If you are lucky enough to catch it initiate the destructive behaviour instantaneous punishment will be of great value. Vary the gap that you keep returning so that the dog waits for this moment. Shock collars, which have also been dealt with in the

section of training equipment, could be of value. The owner can hide and when he sees his pet start the misbehaviour a jolt can be given. If the timing is perfect and it correlates the pain to the activity of destruction then it may never repeat it.

Problems Due to the Dog Being Hyperexcitedness

Canine exuberance is a common cause of problems. Canines that have received training may momentarily lose focus due to distractions that excite them. They cannot be held fully responsible for this and the trainer needs to get back to the basics of obedience training. Often the pup has not been trained in crowded and noisy settings. The best-trained dogs would be those that obey distance commands of his trainer in a crowded park full of young children playing ball! Being gregarious by nature they will love to be in the middle of all the fun. At this stage some problems may begin to show up.

Submissive urination, wherein the pet urinates as soon as it sees members of the family, is often because it gets overexcited. With good training this problem can be resolved. The first thing that the owner or family member needs to do is to ignore his pet as he enters his house. Next pay no attention till it settles down. After this just pat it once without too much emotion in your voice. It will also help if a person already in the house could take it out to urinate just before the owner enters. In due course it will learn to stay calm when the family returns after work. If the joy that the dog feels on seeing its pack come back is reduced then the problem is automatically solved.

Jumping on people is another example of excited behaviour. This often causes problems when visitors come to the house. There are again different reasons for a dog to jump up. The solutions therefore lie in determining the cause. It could jump because of its happiness in seeing the owner or because of sheer insecurity. The former can be dealt with force but never shout on a dog with low self-

confidence. This will only aggravate the problem. The way to tackle a dog that jumps up in happiness is again to ignore it for a while till it settles down. If an assistant can hold it on a leash, then a gentle tug can be given the moment it prepares to leap with a loud 'No'. Repeat this as often as possible till the owner can enter without being pounced upon.

To control those dogs that jump up only to be in the comfort of the owner's arms, more care is needed. The best way to handle such an animal is to leave the room the moment the behaviour starts. This will dampen its enthusiasm and also create a fear that it might be isolated. Re-enter after a minute and if the excited behaviour starts again, leave for a little longer. On the other hand the moment the dog stays calm on seeing you praise it once and then ignore it again.

ADVANCED TRAINING

Most people would be happy to have an obedient pet. This can be easily achieved by following the lessons mentioned in the previous chapters. However for some dog lovers the ultimate challenge would be to train their pets to be proficient in the work they have been bred to do for generations. Dogs like the Labrador are very good at scent determination while others like the Dobermann can be used as guards. With proper training even family pets can be made to perform these tasks. This however needs a lot of time and determination.

I have taken the liberty of adding commands like retrieving, speaking and ceasing to speak on command, food refusal etc as part of basic obedience training. In theory these are part of advanced training but I prefer all pets learning these in basic course. Bite work, guarding, scent determination, agility and tracking are all part of advanced training. Before getting on with this section I have to caution the reader to be careful of teaching these to their pets. Unless the obedience training is exemplary never move on to advanced commands. Imagine a dog that has been trained to attack on command but not being equally proficient in the recall command. Such animals once given an order to attack will not come back to the trainer or owner even if it is called back. At my clinic often I have clients who after a month of basic training want their pets to be taught to be aggressive!

A good understanding of a dog's temperament is necessary before advanced training can be taught. Before

initiating them to guard training it is important to understand their predominating instinct. Those that have a high fight drive or instinct will be the best for security purposes (Plate 27). On the other hand a dog that has more of flight drive and is of a nervous disposition will run away at crucial junctures on being challenged by intruders. No amount of training will be able to guarantee assured protection by these dogs. The second aspect is that the fundamentals of basic training must be good. A pup that has to be taught scent determination first must be perfect in retrieving. Otherwise even though it will be able to identify the object you have sent it to search for it will not bring it back.

Weigh the benefits of a good guard dog against the amount of time needed to actually train it properly. Advanced training should technically be started after it is about one year of age. Till this time it must be given adequate obedience training. The very sight of a large Alsatian is a deterrent and those families with small children should not go in for bite training. A poorly trained dog that is used for protection may turn into a liability. The next section will provide a few insights into parts of advanced training. The services of an experienced trainer are best sought for teaching these commands.

Scent Determination

For a dog to be good at scent determination first be sure as mentioned a little earlier that it knows retrieving well. In theory this training is a continuation of retrieving except that it has to use its nose to decipher which object to bring back. As the training progresses it has to stop using its eyes and rely entirely on its nose! Wait till it matures before you start this training as it puts a fair amount of stress on it.

The first stage of training is to place two similar objects in front of the dog. The first should carry your scent. This could have been taken from your pocket or have been held in your hands for a short time. The second

must be free of this scent and must be placed on the ground with a pair of forceps. Give it a command to retrieve the article. If you are lucky it will go directly to the object with your smell and retrieve it. Such a dog must be praised and given a treat to encourage it. If it does not then call it back and place the palms of your hands below its nose before sending it back to retrieve. Quite a few dogs would correlate the smell provided to them with that of the object and retrieve it.

In case it is still picking up the wrong article do not shout at it. This will only confuse it further and some dogs may even stop retrieving. In such a case place the two objects for example pens, again in front of it. As it begins to retrieve the wrong object in a firm voice say 'No'. Alternatively one can keep the dog on a leash and as it goes near the incorrect pen, give it a tug pulling it towards the correct one. Using this correction technique it will slowly begin to pick up the right object.

In the next stage the object with the scent must be placed a little further away from the one without the smell. If it gets you the desired item praise it and again increase the distance. Providing the smell of your hands could hasten the recovery process (Plate 28). Do not let it get used to only one object and keep changing it. In due course make the recovery articles smaller like car keys etc. so that the animal has to rely solely on its nose to find it. One of my trainers at the clinic varies the technique of scent training a little by first letting the dog smell the object. He then makes it stay at one point and then hides this in a small bush in front of it. Next he returns to the animal and gives it a command to search and fetch. The dog immediately rushes to the bush where two similar objects are placed and in most cases finds the right one. Slowly in the next stage he lets it smell the object and then keeping it down in stay, hides them somewhere where they cannot be seen. He then commands it to search. If the dog is proficient in the first stage it invariably finds the expected object.

The ultimate test for scent determination would be to keep your car key in a pile of other keys. If after being given your scent it is able to get back the right key the training has succeeded. For this to happen the dog must be used to finding objects of different scents. Never let it get used to only your smell. Ask a friend to throw his pen in an open park. Next let it smell the friend's hands and then go and retrieve the article. In this way it gets used to finding objects of varying types and smells. A lot of patience is required especially in those dogs that don't get a hang of what is expected of them. If you get angry and punish them they will in all probability stop retrieving as well.

Tracking

Quite a few films have scenes involving dogs tracking down a criminal. The dog is given the scent of something that may have been dropped by him. Using this scent it is invariably shown to catch the rogue. Most police forces have dogs for tracking criminals (Plate 29). Tracking is a natural instinct of a canine that involves using its sense of smell. It is inborn in some breeds that have been domesticated for ages for this purpose. The sheep dogs meant to herd the flock could use their sense of smell to track any animal that left the herd.

Apart from genetics the other important aspect of tracking is the actual scent. If the dog is able to identify it easily then the quarry will soon be found. The scent is dependent on weather conditions and the direction of the wind. If the wind is in the opposite direction or blows the scent away, then it will be confused. For best results it must have the scent coming towards it, that means there should be minimal cross winds. Most trainers advocate that the quickest way to teach a pup to track is by playing hide and seek with it. Simply put as a young pup the owner runs in front and hides behind a bush while someone else gives a command to find the person. The pet will be eager to get back to the owner and will use its sense of smell to find out

where his pack member has hidden.

This then is the simplest way to train the pup to track. Keep someone hidden and ask it to find out where the person is. The pet will learn to track very fast if small children join this game. The natural exuberance of the child is a great incentive for it to seek him. Keep increasing the distance that you hide till it is forced to use its nose to seek out the hidden person. There could be other technique for teaching tracking. The trainer makes the pet play with a toy. Next it is made to sit in a stay position while the toy is placed far away. The pup is asked to retrieve this and is praised when it does this. Again it is made to sit and stay while the toy is now hidden in a clump of grass or a bush. This time to find its toy it will have to depend on its sense of smell as the object can no longer be seen.

Tracking while training is more of a game, and the dog or pup cannot be forced to use its sense of smell. The only thing that the trainer needs to be careful about is that the pup does not go off on a wrong trail or follow the scent of another animal. This will cause the training to fail. Therefore the trainer must know the trail himself even though he cannot get the scent. This means that he must lay the track himself during the training period. If it moves away from the track it must be reprimanded and set back on the course once again. Try and understand your pup and decipher what it would like to track. While one would get a thrill tracking its master, another could be happier finding its toy. The eventual success of tracking is directly dependent on how much happiness it gets on finding the quarry during training.

Bite-Work

Different trainers call this form of training bite-work, man-work or guarding. In essence this involves teaching the adult dog to protect the owner and to attack and cease to attack any person on command. Each word in the preceding sentence has great significance, as only an adult

mature dog should be initiated into this form of training. The dog must guard the owner and attack only on command. If for any reason it were to attack but not stop on command the consequences would be disastrous.

The first thing that one should realise is that after training a dog for bite-work there is no turning back. The trainer is honing its natural instinct to attack. If for some reason the trainer is unavailable others may find controlling it hard. This is one reason why I feel that families with young children should not teach their pets to guard. Also it would be better if the owner and trainer were the same in this particular form of training. I have a client with two Alsations who employed a professional trainer. The trainer was able to teach the dogs to guard but unfortunately the owner failed to achieve similar control. The end result is that he now has two extremely aggressive animals that attack others at the least stimulus. He has been to the local police on a couple of occasions because of the complaints against his pets!

This training is not for the novice trainer and must be taught by a competent professional trainer who has adequate experience. The first thing that must be borne in mind that until the dog is perfect in obedience, this training must never be contemplated. Let the dog mature till about fifteen months of age. By this time it will have mastered obedience and the trainer will understand its true nature. Nervous pets should never be taught to guard as they may falter at crucial junctures as they predominantly have flight instinct. Caught in a tight spot they may run away leaving the owner stranded. Similarly dogs that are too dominant too are not to be trained for this as they may later prove to be uncontrollable. The best to receive this training are those that appear mature and do not overtly show aggression.

If you are sure that the dog is fit for bite-work then the training can be initiated. In theory there are two ways to teach it. The first is to make it aggressive by provoking

it. Here it is tied up and irritated with a stick or repeatedly taunted. The animal out of sheer frustration and due to its inability to escape gets vicious. This technique though quite popular among some trainers is dangerous and should be avoided. The right way to go about teaching it is by stimulating its hunting instinct or prey drive. All dogs love to chase a quarry, catch it and then kill it. This is a natural inborn tendency of all carnivores. The trainer's main aim is to increase this drive and yet keep it under his control. This keeps the animal stimulated and eagerly makes it want to catch the prey.

Initially the dog is made to play with a thick sack. The main aim of this is to make the pet grab and pull at it. This is the first imaginary quarry it is exposed to. It must therefore be attractive to the animal. Keep taunting it by moving the sack in front of its face till the dog bites it. Let it pull and play with this so that the animal feels a rush of excitement that it has won by capturing the prey. Repeat this exercise till it is attuned to jumping and attacking regularly. Any command that the trainer likes must be simultaneously given like 'Guard' or 'Attack'. The next thing that must be taught is to leave on command. This is equally simple and the moment you want to make it stop attacking, hold a food treat under its nose and say 'Stop'. All dogs will have to open their mouths to eat and hence will stop the attack. Alternate the commands of guarding and stopping before going to the next stage.

In the next stage an assistant is required to wrap this sack around his forearm. He then waves his arm and repeatedly excites the dog while the trainer gives the command to bite (Plate 30). It is best if the dog is held on a strong leash. The moment it grabs and holds the arm the trainer praises it and then gives a command to stop. This is a crucial juncture where it must respond by ceasing to attack. The trainer must also ensure that he has the full attention of the dog. If it seems to lose interest then the assistant can pull its tail or jab it to recreate a stimulus for

guarding. The main aim is that after being given a command to bite or guard an intruder, the complete attention of the canine must be on him and also on the owner's commands. The best trainers also have a hand signal along with the vocal command that the pet is used to. In case the trainer is far away this signal is enough to make it attack.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

In this chapter I will try to answer some of the most common doubts people have about training. It is important to be confident while one trains a pet. Animals can sense any deficiency in self-belief and this will reflect on the eventual results. Even after going through this manual if you have some problems regarding the actual training then clear them before you teach something wrong. A wrong lesson may be very difficult or even impossible to correct.

Can All Dogs Be Trained?

This is probably the most common doubt that owners have. Mixed breeds and pure breeds can both be trained in a similar fashion. However some owners neglect the very basics when they have a mixed breed. If the animal has been taken from an animal shelter or the road then it may have faced a lot of trauma in the initial socialisation period. Imagine the plight of a pup on the road that has been traumatised by children and other dogs. Such an animal in a defensive reaction to the prevailing environment can get to be a little aggressive. Both pure and mixed breeds have their share of hard pups or those animals that are dominant. If the principle of proving the trainers' dominance followed by lavish praise for good behaviour is adhered to, then the training will be successful. There are a few dog shows run by animal lovers where pets of both mixed and pure breeds compete together. The success of such shows proves that any animal can be trained provided the owner takes the pain to do so.

Can All Dogs Learn Everything?

Theoretically with patience and a lot of love all dogs can be taught all that is included in training. However in reality this is often not true. If one understands the principles of training then we are actually sharpening an existing instinct that is prevalent in the animal. For example, a pet that seems to be naturally good at guarding its home can be made a good protection dog. Animals that have a strong sense of smell can be trained for bomb squads etc. For generations man has bred them for certain work that he cannot or does not want to do. The superior canine senses have made them better guards. But expecting a large mastiff to be trained to do what an agile hound does is impractical. The best trainers evaluate the most predominant instinct in their dogs and work on them. The corollary to this question is that even though we might be able to train a particular pet for a particular action, sometimes it is best not to. As mentioned in the section on guarding, a very nervous animal should not be used for protection. Such animals will due to their inborn fear run away at moments that test their training.

What is the Right Age to Start Training?

Training is never time bound. It is a continuous process that goes on for life. It begins very early in the life of the pup where it learns all about socialisation (Plate 31). This is a very crucial stage and is between four to eight weeks of age. In the West the latest concept is to hold puppy parties at the age of sixteen and again at twenty weeks. Here the vet or local breeder invites different pups of similar age to interact with each other under supervision. The potential benefits of these group meetings are that these pets of the same age can socialise with each other. As with their original siblings, if they try to bite each other then they get nipped in return. In this way they continue to learn acceptable behaviour.

The next stage involves the first lessons that the

owner gives at home and involves name recognition, toilet training etc. The actual obedience training should be started at the age of four to five months. Some trainers prefer to wait till the age of eight months to begin training but I prefer it to be started a little earlier. Advanced training should be started after the age of one year, when the dog has matured. In training squads aggressive training is initiated after the age of fifteen months. Never hurry and try to teach too much to a young animal. This may demoralise it and cause development of a fear either of the training or the trainer.

It is a misconception that after the basic obedience-training course the dog will remember things for life. The owner needs to refresh and practice the commands on a regular basis to ensure that the initial lessons are not forgotten.

What is the Minimum Duration of Training?

Due a large number of factors including the monetary considerations of employing a professional trainer this is often what all owners want to know. Though at our clinic we suggest a minimum period of three months, the actual time period may vary. Just like two children, pups too take different time intervals to learn a particular lesson. Some may be fast learners while others take longer. All pets behave well at home where there is no disturbance. The true test of its training comes up when guests come home and excite them. In general as mentioned in the book the moment the pet begins to behave itself in a crowded park full of distractions the training can be considered successful. Till this happens perseverance to the task in hand remains the key to eventual success.

Where Can One Get a Good Trainer?

The best trainer is the owner himself as he gets to be with the pup for the longest period. However if for some reason he does not get time or does not feel confident to train it, help can be sought. Trainers are advertised by the dogs

they have taught! Take a morning walk in any crowded park and look around. A well-trained dog is very easily noticeable, as it will walk in a calm and controlled manner. The owner can be asked about his pet's trainer. The second source of a reliable trainer is the vet. Most vets have trainers at their clinic. Another good way to get a trainer is to look at the weekend classifieds in the major dailies. These have a lot of information on kennel and livestock. Check the credentials of the selected trainer by calling up people whose dogs he has trained in the past. However your pet will provide the final word on the trainer in a couple of days. If it shrinks and runs away at the very sight of the trainer, then his services need to be terminated! I would consider the writing of this manual a success if readers were able to teach their pets basic obedience training after reading it.

What are the Signs of a Well-trained Dog?

A well-trained dog would never embarrass his owner in public. It would walk in a clam manner on the road irrespective of the distractions that exist. On a single call it should return to the owner however loud the surrounding noises may be. It would never steal food in the house irrespective of where the family is. Visitors are greeted only with a wag of the tail and the dog should retire after sniffing them. Over-enthusiastic pet welcomes with jumping, excess barking or urination which show poor training. While travelling in a car it should sit quietly on the back seat without too much nervousness. At the park it should play but never show aggression towards other pets and children. A well-trained animal will also stand still during a veterinary examination without trying to bite or run away.

Does Training Involve Cruelty?

This is another common doubt that owners have. They feel that the dog should be allowed to 'grow up naturally'. My

only question to such people is whether they allow their children also to grow up similarly! Pups and children need discipline and it is the duty of the family to provide it. Training follows scientific lines wherein natural instincts in the animal are strengthened and allowed to grow in acceptable limits. If followed properly there is no cruelty, as a good trainer would try to praise the pup for all the acceptable behaviour. Similarly he would use fear or pain as a tool only if the behaviour was totally unacceptable and needed to be stopped instantly. I have seen more cruelty inflicted in those animals that have not been trained. These animals are dragged on choke collars during walks and beaten to stay quiet when visitors come home. Owners need to differentiate between loving a pet and spoiling it. Pets need love but one cannot afford to sacrifice discipline.

What are the Common Causes of Training to Fail?

The most common reason for training to fail is that the owner cannot enforce his will over that of his pet. Here I do not mean that it has to be dominated all the time but in its mind it should be clear as to who the alpha member of the family is. Quite often the family confuses it, as one member encourages a habit while another discourages the same. Some natural instincts of the pup are allowed to develop. Biting fingers and jumping up in excitement are encouraged in them and frowned when the same habit persists as adults. In some cases fear of the owner makes it diffident and reluctant to learn. Here the most common word spoken to it is 'No', and very little praise is shown. Such pets start to lose the value of being reprimanded and rarely show respect. Training is a complex process and small things could prove to be of great value. For example the choice of toys we provide send different indications to the pet. While normal squeaky toys and balls have no significance tugs are different. Tugging toys where the pet pulls one end and the trainer another must always end

with the tug being secured by the latter. If the pup wins and gets the tug toy it has won a small psychological victory that it will try to utilise later. It may later try to pull the bed sheet or carpets to get the same thrill of victory. Last but not the least trying to teach the pet to learn too fast can result in failure.

How Does One Know Whether Training is not Going on Expected Lines?

The main indication the owner first needs to watch out for is whether the pet is happy to go for the training lessons. If it is reluctant and tries to hide when its time to go for training, something is amiss. Secondly if after the initiation of the lessons the dog seems nervous or neurotic and behaves abnormally the training is going wrong. Sudden anger, excessive barking, nervousness or starting to soil the house are all indications that the animal is affected negatively. After a couple of months of training the pet should respond to the basic obedience commands like sit, down and stay even if not for long periods. If the pet gets agitated at the very sight of the training equipment it is time to stop for a short period and identify the cause before incurable habits are developed.

Can Bad Habits Be Rectified?

Often the most common reason the owner begins to think about training is due to the dog having learnt some bad habit. An entire chapter has been devoted to this aspect and the key to solving such problems lies in identifying the problem. The obvious way to tackle any crisis is to try and eradicate the cause. If the dog, for example, has started to steal food then the obvious thing to do would be to keep eatables out of its reach. The second aspect would be to try and catch it during the act and reprimand it instantly. If it is able to correlate the punishment to its last deed then it will learn fast. After this the next stage would be to get back to the basics and refresh the obedience lessons.

What is Expected of Your Pet at a Dog Show?

The dog show is generally an exhibition of a dog's physical beauty, training skills and its physical fitness. In India however most of the shows restrict themselves to the exterior features of the pet and are nothing more than beauty exhibitions. Here it is expected to stay put in a disciplined manner while the judge looks at the breed specifications. The skin, coat, musculature, stance and gait are given points. Then the best animal among its breed is selected to compete with similar winners of other breeds. The top dogs from all the different breeds compete for the best in show. The pet that gets the maximum points from all the shows goes on to win the top dog of the year award.

There is another kind of show that tests the dog for its obedience. It is quite popular in the West where equal importance is given to the shows mentioned above. The obedience shows include the judge assessing the response to all the commands like sit, down, stay, heel, scent determination etc. The dog and trainer must appear to be a team with good coordination. The judge looks at the fluency with which it responds to the trainer. Most commands are given to it from a distance. For a dog to succeed at this level it must be used to performing in areas of great distractions. The show ground will be invariably noisy and crowded. Any pet that gets affected by the noisy crowds will not succeed. This show is the ultimate test for any dog's obedience skills.

The last type of show normally tests the agility of a dog. Here the dogs are graded according to their sizes where obstacles are laid out. The agility shows gained acceptance about thirty years back and the success of the shows lies in the fact that any kind of dog can compete in it. Mongrels, mixed breeds and pure breeds all compete on an equal platform. This show is fast and exhilarating and can be commonly seen on the Discovery channels. Dogs have to run through hurdles, hedges, loops and lie on a table for few seconds before commencing to proceed for a

long jump and a jump over a water hurdle (Plate 32). Next it must go through a collapsible tunnel made of non-slip cloth, a pipe tunnel and weaving poles before reaching an area where it must pause till the judge asks it to proceed. If you thought this was the end, more follows, as the dogs must then get through a seesaw hurdle, a dog walk over a plank before getting through the final obstacle to reach the finish line. The dog that gets through this course the fastest with the minimal negative markings wins!

FURTHER READING

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This book is meant to help people understand the finer nuances of training their pets. It aims to make the pet owner and potential reader understand that dog training is probably the most important aspect of rearing a pet. People underestimate the damage that an untrained pet can cause, be it emotional, physical, financial or social. This manual brings out the psychological aspects of how canine brain works, and how best the owner can train the pet gently, without punishment. The most modern techniques have been written about to ensure that readers are up-to-date with the best methods used worldwide.

Dr. Gautam Unny is a practising veterinarian in New Delhi, and has an experience of more than a decade in handling, training and treating dogs. He is a gold medalist from the Madras Veterinary College. Besides writing for numerous pet magazines, websites, etc., Dr. Unny has also authored two books on dog care. He has his own website catering to the needs of his clients, and is also active in radio and television talk shows.



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